

## Aching Heart

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## Aching Heart

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### Summary

‘Fuck buddies’ is more like it.

They have sex, Dream kicks George out (or vice versa) and then they don’t speak again until they have to pass each other papers in class or one of them gets horny. It’s purely transactional, no feelings, no kissing, and definitely no talking about it.

or, becoming 'friends with benefits' with the football captain was the worst decision of george's life

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

new fic omg :0  
ive wanted to write football player dream for too long so here we are! hope u guys  
enjoy!  
tysm to [ro](#) for beta-ing!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Friends with benefits is a stupid term, George has decided.

‘Friends with benefits’ implies that if it weren’t for the fact that George is semi-good at giving head and doesn’t have a big enough friend group to spread a rumour, then Dream would give him more than just a passing look when they’re standing outside of their comp-sci classroom, waiting for a professor that’s not even going to show up.

It implies that they would talk outside of fleeting interactions, that the ‘come over’ texts aren’t the only thing keeping them in contact. They aren’t friends, that much has been made obvious.

‘Fuck buddies’ is more like it.

They have sex, Dream kicks George out (or vice versa) and then they don’t speak again until they have to pass each other papers in class or one of them gets horny. It’s purely transactional, no feelings, no kissing, and definitely no talking about it.

Which is exactly why George didn’t want to go to this football game.

Karl had dragged him to it, told him that they wouldn’t even have to stay for too long and that he just wanted to see Sapnap on the field for a bit like any good boyfriend should. But even then, George had been thoroughly against it. Because aside from the fact that American Football is the dumbest sport ever created, George doesn’t want to put himself through having to watch the hot, sweaty players waddle around a field for far too long.

Mainly because his eyes are going to be glued to one player no matter what. The one whose bed he’s in every other night.

Dream *has* to be the football captain, he just has to, because he gets everything he wants: a scholarship, a friend group of around five hundred adoring fans, and George apparently. As pathetic as that is to admit.

So in the bleachers of a dumb game, staring down past a million heads that all somehow knew that this was the night to show up, George is sat down—savouring the little warmth he has left and trying his very best not to complain. Karl fucked off a while back to go see Sapnap and is yet to return with the snacks that he’d promised. And George wants to say he isn’t a little bit angry, but he is. That’s undeniable. Being left alone in the stands of a game he doesn’t even like will do that to a person.

The wind isn’t strong but the cold still bites at his nose, leaves him red-faced and biting his own lip

to give himself something to do. And at some point, the guy on his left decided that personal space wasn't an issue and that he was allowed (to George's horror) to squeeze up shoulder to shoulder with him and try to breathe in the same air—even with an obvious, mild cold.

*Some people,* George glares.

It's like that until the game ends.

They win, because the ego's of the whole team are riding on it and it'd be a sin for them not to. And George is forced to endure the cheers and the laughs as everyone stumbles out of high bleachers, pretending that this is the most exciting thing they've been to in their lives.

He doesn't want to be here—it's written all over his face. In the way his lips are curled down even if his jaw is angled skywards, and the way his eyes can't help but roll when some guy he's talked to approximately two times claps him on the back as though George himself had done something to win the game. There's no sense to a mob; they're mindless, miserable creatures that glisten with disinclination only to mask it with wit.

George could go the rest of his life without ever having to see another game of American football.

He's barely missed by a swarming crowd as he hurries down the steps to the field, earning small, unpleasant glances when his shoulder bumps into another. It's busy, too busy, and there's no chance that George is going to spend another few minutes here and not in the comfort of his own home with headphones smothering his hair and a blanket wrapped around his neck. So against his best wishes, he's on a hunt. Searching for Karl, who seems to be the most elusive guy on the planet when he wants to be.

But soon enough his attempts are proven fruitful.

Renaissance hands move to push away a strand of fallen hair, George turning to a shout of his own name from green floors and a mess of jerseys.

Of course, Karl has to be in the middle of the field. He just has to be.

"George!" Karl yells again, waving hands and a smile so big it's taken half of his face. "Over here."

There are two options.

Option one: George could refuse, go back to his dorm by himself and not open the door later when Karl turns up in clothes that are probably stolen from his boyfriend and swollen lips that are never as discreet as he believes them to be. He could find a nice book or a new show to watch, maybe catch up on some work for his next class all while deciding that he wants to take up a skincare routine again. And most importantly, he won't have to stick around for much longer.

Or option two: George could walk in the middle of a crowded field, through a sea of sweaty football players and their girlfriends, and talk to the most annoying couple he's ever had the misfortune of knowing.

Stupidly, George chooses the latter.

"Hey," he mutters, ignoring the smiles he's being sent by the others.

"Hey," Karl starts. His left arm is around Sapnap's shoulders, head against head like there isn't sweat hanging off each curled strand of hair. "Sapnap was so good, wasn't he?" Karl grins,

flashing a grin with pink in his eyes. “He doesn’t believe me.”

George should have left when he had the chance.

“Yeah, he was,” he deadpans. “Can we go now?”

“What?” Karl genuinely sounds confused. “No? There’s the party to get to, and there’s enough space for us in the back of Sap’s car so he can drive us in a bit. After he’s changed.”

*Parties.*

“I’m not going,” George states, leaving no room for disagreement.

His arms cross in lieu of the silence he receives, the silence that tells him both Karl and Sapnap are staring at him with dumbfounded expressions.

“What do you mean you’re not going?” Karl asks.

“I mean I don’t want to go to a party right now,” George huffs, eyes flicking to the aforementioned boyfriend so he can tack on a final jab. “And especially not in *his* car.”

If it’s possible the air gets tighter, glances get shorter. Rigid.

Karl met Sapnap during the second week, days after he and George had finally met despite the fact that they’re literally roommates. And from the very start he’d been hooked. Gripped by the way Sapnap smiled and returned his hugs, the way he’d flirted without a shield as though he knew the other would like his charm. It was disgusting, especially since George was the one who had to follow along to all of Sapnap’s practises and sit opposite them in the booth of a shitty diner while they danced around each other and pretended that ‘friends’ could ever be the right label.

Everything about Sapnap makes George sour. From his friend group to his hobbies, George can’t understand why Karl is so into him.

“Why not?” Sapnap frowns. “My car is perfectly fine.” He turns to Karl. “Isn’t it?”

There are daggers in the pupil’s of Karl’s eyes the next time he looks, ones that rip through George’s skull as though they really carry a threat. Being nice isn’t George’s forte, he isn’t nice to the people that wouldn’t give him a chance if it weren’t for pitiful circumstances. Sapnap is one of those people. The only reason he offers to drive them both around is because he knows Karl would appreciate his least popular friend having the means to leave campus for once.

Still, Karl’s niceness has an end too.

“It is,” he smiles. “*Right*, George?”

A tone is raised, words bleeding red in the form of frustration.

“It’s not.” Enjoyment shouldn’t come from seeing his friend stare up at him, annoyed and displeased, but George was left alone in the bleachers for the past hour—he’s bound to be a little bitchy. “Your car smells like sweat and hair product.”

“Okay,” Karl announces, breaking away from Sapnap’s hold to guide George back a bit.

Ice is in a clear expression, warmth still falling through the gentle way in which George is manoeuvred around, even if it’s obvious Karl wishes he could shove.

“You can go back to the dorm now.”

“Alone?” George raises an eyebrow.

“Yes, alone.”

“Why aren’t you coming with?”

This time, George knows he’s pushing it. He still tries though, still wants to see the way Karl reacts.

Strangely rational, is the response. “Because even if you’re a complete bore, I’m not, and so I will be going to that party and staying at Sap’s place after. Okay?”

It doesn’t seem like a real question. “Okay.”

Cherry smiles bloom redder than the bursting of blood vessels. George can see teeth and joy and pretends to stumble when Karl pulls him into a hug and then releases him like touch can burn. They’re still on the field, still in the presence of a thousand others, but Karl doesn’t care—he steps back from George and grabs Sapnap’s hand, relishing in the slightest kiss that’s pressed against his cheek.

*PDA*, another one of George’s many hates.

“See you guys later,” he calls as he turns away, ripping his eyes from Karl’s as pink lips curve up.

He should have brought a jacket, or a hat to cover up his ears, because right now he’s going to freeze before he even gets off the field. Each step he takes pushes him past dissipating crowds, through a blur of lights and up past the little steps that run into the hallway just below the stands.

There’ll be warmth in there, George hopes. If there is he’s going to stay for as long as possible, sitting in his own self pity until clarity kicks in and he can walk back to his room without hating Karl for the position he’s been put in. The one that means he’ll be lying in bed far too early, when light still sits in the sky and the hum of chatter won’t have died down in grey swirls.

His hands feel stiff as he tries to move his own fingers, opening up the first door he sees to be welcomed into a heated embrace.

Warmth doesn’t begin to describe it. Because this isn’t just warmth, this is an empty corridor where no one is breathing down his neck or begging him to go to some party even though it quite obviously isn’t George’s scene. For just a second, his body slumps.

“I thought you hated football.”

The shriek that George lets out is mortifying.

“Christ,” he spits, turning to face the noise with a heartbeat picked up to ten. There are shoes scuffing the floors, footsteps creeping forwards, and great, just his luck—the one guy he never wants to see. “Fucking hell, you scared me.”

Dream laughs. “Sorry,” he shrugs, somehow not sounding sorry at all.

He’s sweaty, unreasonably so, with dirty blond hair falling in strands past his eyes, twisted, damp to the touch, and strewn so that he has to brush them away every few seconds. And he’s got that glow about him, almost similar to the one he gets after sex. The type of glow that makes his smile

that much brighter and his teeth a little sharper, especially when he grins and stares down through darkened irises, right at George.

*Attractive*, George almost wants to think. If Dream wasn't a dick then it'd be more pleasant to admit that he's easy on the eyes.

Alas, he is. And alas, George is stuck being the only one in the student body that sees it.

"Did you find out you were into sports in the time we were apart?"

"I do," George snaps, picking at invisible strings with an attempt to throw the other off. "...hate football."

It only serves to make Dream's grin grow wider.

"So what?" He chuckles, dark, walking forwards. He's on the other end of the hallway and yet George can feel phantom lips against the shell of his ear. "You came here for me?"

"As if."

'Fuck buddies' only talk like this when they want something—for Dream, that thing is always sex.

Usually, at the end of a game, George is still in his dorm, having never left in the first place. He'll hear noise and chatter and be far too invested in his work for any normal guy, and just before anyone can interrupt, before the night is low and the parties are surely over, he'll get a message.

Short. It always is.

***Dream:*** *come over*

Humans are weak creatures. Their bones are fragile, skin is flimsy, and their teeth will never bite as hard as any animal. Alongside that, they let themselves be caught up in a slight expression. Dream is walking forwards and it's intentional, each step is meant to drive lust up George's spine. And ultimately George is human. Always, he caves.

Dream is in front of him, with lean shoulders and a body that does its best to push George back, against the wall, bored expression bleeding charm.

"Well now that you're here," he mumbles.

It's a tone he only uses in bed. That, George assumes. It's not as though they talk outside of there after all. Still, that tone proves useful—even if George hates to admit it, the way Dream speaks, swirling with speckled want and pathetic greed, is always enough to get him going. Makes him wish Dream didn't have to be such an asshole so they could have an interaction outside of *this*.

"You're not tired after all that?" he asks.

Small talk now, they'll get to ripping each other's clothes off later.

"A bit, but I can still get it up." Dream's eyes flick down, gaze unshielded. Underneath him, George feels naked. Pressed to the wall, he can't pretend he doesn't like it. "Were you watching?"

"No," George scoffs, venomous, green. "I don't like football, remember."

He's only saying it for the look he gets in return—the way Dream laughs and tips his head forward, shuffling closer so he can pry George's legs apart where he stands, slipping his thigh between them

like they aren't in an almost public place.

Dream has always been like this. For as long as George has known him, for as long as they've been doing it, Dream has always been the one to make George want. He moulds him into the perfect toy with a few simple touches, by putting a hand up by his head and moving to ghost his lips against the point of his jaw. George tries not to melt but he does.

Fuck Dream. Fuck him and effect his has on George's every bone.

"Well yeah." Dirty words, muttered like they're secret. (Admittedly, they are.) "But if you compliment me a bit I might feel generous enough to go down on you."

"No, you won't."

"Try me," Dream grins. "I'm coming down off of a win babe, I'm feeling charitable."

George tries not to flinch. "Don't call me babe."

Pet names are off the table, they always have been. Dream doesn't like to listen to the rules sometimes.

"Why not?"

"Because I don't like it," George scowls. "It's not like we're friends."

"Right." Dream's leg shifts up, pressing between George's legs until it takes all the effort in the world to not grind down against it. "You're still a bitch that only cares about me for my dick."

A scoff. "Like you're any better."

"I'm not," Dream admits. His lips are cold, running along George's neck until the touch starts to burn, kissing, feeling, doing the best to find that weak spot under his jaw so he can hear humanity fall apart. "But at least I don't pretend I would be talking to you if you weren't putting out."

One of his hands snakes back, squeezing George's ass through his trousers, and his lips, his fucking pink pretty lips still drag over the spot under George's ear. The sickest part of him wants to grab, to push that blond head down with frantic hands and make him bite—let him leave cherry marks branded against the skin until there's nothing pale or alabaster, or even clouded left to cover. But that would be too much. George doesn't feel like proving Dream right.

"Don't you have somewhere to be?" George asks.

Against his will, slender fingers thread through sandy hair, not tugging but holding, trying to drag Dream back before George seriously gets a hard-on in the middle of a hallway—even if said hallway is empty and just out of the way of the rest of life. Because they've moved together to be standing in a place that's just out of sight if anyone doesn't come looking, one that means George can lean back and see Dream caging him in while doing his best to make the other whimper.

And it's a good job they have, because as soon as Dream looks up there's a sound from the other end of the hall, slight footsteps inching forwards.

"Dream?"

George turns his head before he even thinks about it, away, hiding. Dream's arm is in just the right position to block his face.

It's Sapnap, as much as George hates to admit it, he's been around him enough to recognise that voice anyway. "After party. You coming?"

"No, not feeling it," Dream breathes out.

They've never been caught like this, normally they're both more discreet, only meeting after the sun has gone down and Dream's shared house is empty, or too tired to fully rise. The few times they've met in George's dorm have been planned out too. Visits reserved for when Karl is back home and the floors are almost empty, to lessen the chances of getting found.

Dream has always been adamant about those rules. *No one can ever know*, is what he always insists upon, if they do find out then it's over. Point blank, over. Either because Dream doesn't want the whole 'complete dick that only cares about sex' thing attached to his reputation, or the fact that he's fucking anyone other than a perky blonde cheerleader would be too much of an embarrassment to live down.

Now though, they've gotten reckless.

Sometimes, Dream asks him over when people are still up, a chance message sent with a picture of him holding the place in his sweats where it's clear he's hard, inviting the other into his bed without saying as much. And in response George will be a tease as well—sending little videos of himself with things in his mouth, bunching up his shirt with fragile, shaking hands and asking what time practice is over so he knows to leave his door unlocked.

It's both of them. Still, Dream's never been one to start something like this outside of privacy.

Apparently a win clouds his mind.

"You're not feeling it?" Sapnap asks.

"Not today, no."

Dream's tone is still dark, like he hasn't been able to shake it with his thigh still between George's legs and his body doing its best to hide the others.

"Why not?" It's almost a joke. An outsider not getting too close but staying by the doorway like he's fine with Dream having his secrets. Like George isn't even there.

George doesn't like that. One of his hands finds its way to Dream's waist, dipping underneath his shirt and his pants just to play with the waistband of his underwear. A reminder of where he is and who he's got, a polite way of asking him to tell Sapnap to fuck off.

Dream's expression is strained, more so when George grinds his hips down ever so slightly.

"I'm in the middle of something, Sap."

There's a laugh from the other end of the hallway, slightly embarrassed words coming across as cocky. And George cannot understand why Karl likes this guy, because the way he sees it, Sapnap is just as much of a dick as Dream, just with less charm.

"Okay, okay." Defeat. Footsteps trail back, Sapnap's voice seemingly getting quieter while George pretends he isn't even there to listen. "See you around dude, don't stay out too late."

"I won't."



It's a lie. Dream's so much of an asshole that he even has to lie to his friends.

Three seconds. One. Two. Three. And then the slamming of a door gives George the opportunity to turn his head back to the other's, cocky, annoying. "You won't?" he asks, because teasing is what he does best. He can hate Dream, sure, but that doesn't mean they have to stand in unsure silence when they both know what they're about to do.

"No, I'm planning on taking someone back to my place right now actually."

The way he's able to switch back into that role so suddenly never fails to make George falter.

Scoffing, he snaps out of it fairly quick. "You want to get your dick wet that badly?"

Dream nods. His hand comes down, the one on George's ass still there and holding while the other tries to tap at his lips, get his mouth open so Dream can watch him gag.

"Been thinking about these lips," Dream mutters. Darkness is back in his eyes, George having to look up through clumped eyelashes to see his unshielded gaze. "The way you take my dick so fucking well."

"We're not having sex outside the locker room," George scoffs.

Discreet.

But Dream pulls sense out of him, inching George's hips forwards to make him grind against his thigh with such an unsteady pace being set. It's not frantic but it certainly isn't dignified, and George wishes he wasn't thinking with his dick right now so he could just go back to his dorm, alone, like he had previously intended.

That's certainly not happening now though, because Dream may be an asshole but he sure knows how to make George feel good.

"The house should be empty."

The words are muttered into open air, George grinning as Dream flashes him that signature smile, the one with sharp teeth and intent so dark it should come with a warning.

Fuck buddies don't talk outside of sex, they don't. When they seek each other out, it's simple, easy, just mind-blowing sex between two people that really cannot stand each other. Rough touches, pent up frustration and dirty words that'll never be shared with anyone else. And to some people that'd be a no-go but *god*, George loves it.

No strings attached. No feelings.

That's why he always takes the bait.

He nods, arms getting looped around Dream's neck to drag the other down. Face-level. "Where's your car?"

"This way."

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To put it simply, Dream's car is disgusting.

It's a beat up truck that George has had sex in the back of one too many times. It's windows are one touch away from breaking and the paint is peeling to show off the rust that lies underneath. And to top it all off, Dream seems to think it's the greatest thing on the planet.

Getting his seats dirty is a death sentence, eating without offering to wipe down the whole thing after is as big of an offence as it gets. And while George doesn't exactly have his own car to compare it to, he's sure that he'd be a far better owner than Dream. A far better driver too.

Safety should always come first. When Dream is already hard because George tried to blow him seconds before they set off, safety gets a little clouded though. The thought of getting back to his place a little faster so he can have George against rough sheets, share touches that'll never be strong enough to leave lasting marks, must take over. And George doesn't complain, he never will. He wants this just as much. But still, safety is important, and with the way that Dream is driving, he should honestly feel a little scared.

Yet somehow, that doesn't stop him from slouching down and putting on a show.

"Stop touching yourself," Dream mutters, hands squeezing the wheel with a grip so tight it's bound to damage.

"Can't," George groans. "Need it."

He's a mess. A golden mess of moans and sin, with one hand around himself as he tries not to shake in the front seat of Dream's car. Undeniably, his own touch will never be as good as others, but he'll let himself fall apart on it nonetheless. Because watching Dream's face sour out of the corner of his eye every time he throws his head back and lets sticky honey drip from his throat, is the most addictive feeling of them all.

"Slut," Dream bites. It's obvious he isn't really angry, stripped back to arousal and made to hold himself back. "Stop the sounds or I'm going to have to pull over. And I don't keep condoms in my car."

"You should," George laughs. "Would make this easier."

One of his hands is free, pulling up his shirt just to let the other hand be seen where it disappears into his underwear, and George loves this. He relishes in this thrill, which is exactly why Dream keeps him around.

Umber eyes can't help but roam, dragging over strong arms and veined hands, pleading for their touch while the man behind knows that right now it can't happen. Nevertheless, George lets himself think, slipping back into pleasure as he thumbs the head of his cock and bites back a moan so loud it'd leave him senseless.

"Drive faster," he orders.

He's being snappy but he doesn't care. Dream knows he's like this, if anything, he's worse.

"George."

"*Dream*," George gasps. "Need you to fuck me."

"Be patient."

It's not fair. Patience isn't in George's bones and it's certainly not running through his veins when all he can feel is pleasure. And Dream knows that, he knows the things that turn George on and how well he takes to being spoken to in such a tone. Without even asking, he knows exactly what to do to make George weak, shaking in his bed while he's fucked into oblivion, strong hands on his waist and bruises that never rise high enough to be uncovered atop his waistband.

They're filthy, dirty disgusting things, but now George is thinking and he can't stop himself from getting even harder. Wishing Dream lived on campus like everyone else so he didn't have to take this ridiculously long drive just to get what he so desperately wants.

Melting lips bleed moans that rise just as sweet. George makes sure to angle his towards Dream's ears, hoping that it'll give him the incentive to drive a little faster, get them back before he reaches his end alone. Fuck buddies do things like this, they tease and they taunt because the embarrassment of anyone else finding out isn't even there. It's a secret. *Secret*. God, times like this always feel the best.

The house is close and Dream pulls in with recklessness like no other. He knows no one else is home and so he knows that in opening George's door and dragging him out with hands on hips, back pressed to chest, he won't be incriminating himself by any means.

It's a rush. Want like nothing else, and George fucking loves it, even when he's being ushered up creaking steps and pushed into a room that's not his own.

Pushy hands are pulling at his clothes. He's hard, so is Dream, pressed up against him and trying to pull George back so he can press those cranberry lips against the nape of his neck. This façade won't last for long. Soon enough, gentle touches will turn back to poison arrows—George will be sobbing in another man's hold without the care for how pathetic he seems.

"Love your ass," Dream groans. Darkness is in his tone, grit in his every word.

"Yeah?" George hums.

"Love it so much." Frantic hands push a lithe frame forward, onto the bed so he's lying face down and has to turn with legs strewn apart to see the other. "Can't wait to fuck you."

"Hurry up then," George snaps, hush despite himself, needy with the fact he's been touching himself the whole way here.

"Want to get it out for me?" Dream asks. He gestures down, where he's hard and it's showing through his trousers, like he really expects George to be begging to do the work for him.

"No." George doesn't move. "Do it yourself."

Although the air is warm, and spit-slick lips are pressed together like sharpened lines, Dream nods, staring as though George on his bed, bitchy as always, is the most compelling thing he's ever seen. Drawstrings are pulled tight, once tied together and now being unwrapped with unbridled precision as Dream tries and struggles to get his own pants off, never once looking away while he does.

His shirt goes first. *Football players*, George muses, bodies like nothing else. Then hands move to the waistband, playful, skating against skin. Often, George presses red to the bone underneath when he's on his knees. He lets white-hot arousal burn through him as he allows the others' arrogance to get him stirred. Today will likely be the same. The knowledge on how to make George lose himself is something only Dream seems to possess.

And to make it that much better, Dream is *big*.

Sometimes that cocksure attitude really doesn't need to make up for anything that matters, because no matter how many times George has seen Dream with his shirt on the floor and his pants kicked to the side, it never fails to make him choke.

"Still want to be a bitch?" Dream asks. He's pushing his clothes away, grabbing George by the hips to drag him down the bed like the distance is already too far.

"Shut up," George groans. Hands are cold underneath his shirt, peeling it off of the skin with rosemary fingerprints being pressed down featherlight. "Just fuck me."

All Dream does is laugh. That smile is one reserved only for this, not the one he gives in the halls or the one he dishes out to those who adore him after each game, but the one that's meant for sex and this bedroom. The one that's forbidden to be talked about unless it's right now, with him and him only. George thinks he wears it well. Although he hates himself for even believing it, Dream suits that confidence—surety, strength that can't halt and a dick so big it'll leave George sore in the mornings yet to come.

Confidence is alluring. On anyone else it may be a sign of hidden weakness but on Dream, George knows it to be true. It's one of the many reasons that he hates him after all. Those who have everything handed to them on a silver platter tend to walk around with that kind of confidence. The type that George can never even fake.

"Pants off," Dream orders, helping even though he has no need.

They're thrown to the floor, discarded because they have no use, and perhaps one day that'll be George too, but right now he isn't thinking about it. Right now he has Dream on top of him and he can't be wondering about what'll happen when they finally both decide to move onto something real. Something that isn't some taboo secret that's never allowed out.

Questionably, George doesn't realise that 'not thinking about it' might just be thinking about it under a different name, until he's ripped from his thoughts by Dream's knowing hands. The ones that drag George's underwear down and off of his body before wrapping a palm around his cock, tentative.

"You okay?" Dream asks.

He doesn't really want to know. Just needs to see if George is ready to go ahead.

"Yes," he spits.

Touch. Bodies pressed together and lips that never meet.

"Can I prep you then?"

And George hates Dream. He doesn't like him, or his sport, or his car, or the way everyone else seems to worship the ground that he walks on. But right now George is slipping into bliss at such expert hands, so to be frank he'll never care about labels. Right now, all he wants is sex.

Then he can get on with his life. Then everything can go back to normal.

"Yes," he grits out, using every muscle in his body not to buck up into the other's fist. "Need it."

They'll have sex and it'll be amazing. George will take five minutes to shake it off and then he'll slip out of the front door, walk home without a worry and then tell Karl that he's been in his dorm all day because that's just what's assumed of him. Dream won't look at him in class, and George

certainly won't seek him out again. They'll get on with their lives, right up until it's time for this god-awful routine to happen again. The one that he hates to love.

George's head falls back against the pillows.

Only the worst of secrets can feel as good as this.

---

George doesn't sleep at Dream's, that's an unspoken rule.

Unspoken in the sense that the first time they hooked up, Dream had kicked George out seconds after he'd finished, with the claim that it was just better that way. After that, neither really questioned the routine. They have sex and then they leave.

Simple.

But today, George is tired. Weak bones and fragile minds have never made good pairings, and after sex George is already lethargic so with the added bonus of his already fatigued state, even thinking he'd be able to make it out of Dream's bed was just a hope. Dumb.

Dream doesn't seem to mind too much though. He's annoyed, George can tell, but other than that he doesn't put up too much resistance, just mutters, "don't get too close," when he's throwing the condom in the bin and announcing that he's going to take a shower.

And that's how George ends up sleeping at an almost strangers house. A house that's home to four other guys, all football players, all terrifying, and all people that George would not like to see in the morning. It's fine though. He's gotten good at sneaking out.

---

Waking up in Dream's bed is almost as awful as if George were to sleep in his car.

In the light, the disarray is obvious, clothes on the floor and empty cans of deodorant littering each empty space, and it smells. That's one of the first things George notices, because apparently in his sex-crazed state he didn't realise that four guys living together brews the most god-awful stench he's ever had the misfortune of sleeping in.

There's a weight on his shoulders, a face too close to his, and George tries not to groan when he shoves the other's arm off of him and spits his words into the open air.

"What the fuck?"

Next to him, a body stirs.

"Jesus," Dream groans, rubbing sleep from the corners of his eyes with unsteady hands. "Thanks for waking me up."

"You're welcome," George scowls. "Where are my clothes?"

“I don’t know,” Dream huffs. His head falls back to the pillow, turned into the warmth like he’s trying to hide from the other’s stare. And George wants to be annoyed by it, but there’s a small part of him that finds the motion attractive—especially when a strong arm, lined with the faintest muscle comes up for Dream to rest his forehead on. “I thought you’d be nicer in the mornings.”

Unfortunately, Dream is still himself.

“Sorry to disappoint.”

Inside of the bed, blankets provide feeble warmth. Outside, George wants to scream. He lets his limbs fall from behind the sheets, sitting up with a bare chest and weakness that runs through him relentlessly. Standing will surely be its own feat. With the way George’s legs shook and trembled, caged another’s waist and were pushed back to frame his own chest, it’ll be a miracle if he’ll even be able to move without falling.

He’s sure the sight will be nothing short of hilarious to someone like *Dream*.

“You think it’s too early to try and leave?” George murmurs. Whether he’s talking to the other, or just trying to settle his own distress is unknown. “Will anyone be awake?”

He’s never tried to leave this early. Usually, they’re both far more prompt with it all.

“Probably,” Dream huffs. He’s on his side and then lying on his back, slowly pushing up so he can lean against the headboard. “Some of the guys like to go get breakfast on their days off.”

“Shit.”

“It’s fine.” Dream shakes his head, as if shaking away a bad thought or just trying to pretend George isn’t even there. “God, remind me to kick you out next time.”

It earns a smile in response, fake, sweet, George can put on the expression so easily it should be feared. “Fuck you.”

Dream only laughs. The sheets are bundled around his waist, danger underneath as he pushes his chest up to stretch. The back and forth, of hate, of lust, definitely doesn’t stop after the sun has risen. George doesn’t like Dream. That being said, he’s allowed to find him attractive.

Blinking eyes travel low, over the planes of Dream’s chest then down to his stomach where it’s obvious the other is trying to flex. Not much can be discussed, there’s nothing for them to talk about anyway, ‘not friends’ will forever be the perfect phrase, so George has no shame in his staring, letting emerald green assess him while he allows the sheets to drag him back.

Dream huffs out a breath. “Suck my dick.”

“It’s too early for sex.”

“I’m hard though.”

Embarrassingly, George’s eyes flick down. *Dream definitely isn’t lying*. For a second he just sits there, looking, grip tight against the sheets. He has no reason to say yes, it’s not as though he’ll be getting anything in return—Dream is notoriously selfish in bed. But he’s got time, they both do, and he might as well keep Dream happy if he wants the next time to be good, if he’ll be staying in this room until everyone else clears out.

So George takes in a sharp breath, closing his eyes for just a second as Dream wears a silver smile.

Haughty, he knows the response.

“Fine.” George is moving too quickly, dipping under the sheets so he can settle just below the other. “You owe me something in return though.”

“Shut up,” Dream groans.

His dick is already out, hard and poking up against his stomach, and George is face level with it, lying down on the bed with a thousand covers over the top of his body. (An upside of Dream being ridiculously well off is that his bed is long enough to accommodate five of them. George can lie like this and his feet aren’t even hanging off the edge.)

To admit that he likes this would be humiliating. If anyone were to ask then he’d say he’s only doing it because it’s a standard, guys like blowjobs—neither George nor Dream are the exception. But secretly, maybe, George half-likes the way fingers will thread through his hair, choke him on something too big and make him take it as his throat is fucked. Clouding his vision, Dream plays perfectly, grinning down as though George is his bitch and harsh motions is a fantasy that they both have.

The head is guided between George’s lips, forcing his mouth open wider as he’s told to take it in. “Don’t want to hear your voice right now.”

If he could scowl, George would.

Dream’s cock is heavy on his tongue, stretching his lips apart and making him drool. Nothing can explain the way that George relishes the feeling, he loves the taste, the fog, and how Dream holds him down for less than a second before finally letting George come up, dragging his tongue on the underside as he does so.

“Shit,” Dream mutters. “You’re fucking good at that.”

Cruel, George stays there, leaning on his elbows to allow his hands to take the base where he can’t reach. It’s obvious that Dream is annoyed, he wants more, always does, always will, but George has never been one for that easy pleasure, he much prefers to make Dream wait, beg.

His own body betrays him though, impurity forcing him to dip his head down and take Dream in that much further, feeling his cock twitch on his tongue like this is just enough. A rough noise rips through Dream’s chest, leaving George choking on his own laugh while he hollows his cheeks and slowly moves his head up and down, letting his tongue do the work that makes the other fall apart.

But nothing can ever go too smoothly. Before George knows it the sound of the door creaking open is looming behind them and the remaining sheets are thrown over his head to hide identity. Panic is evident. George doesn’t know whether or not he should move.

“Dream,” Some guy says. George can hear movement, Dream’s roommate sticking his head in, oblivious to what goes on underneath the sheets. “Team’s going out, you coming?”

Somehow, Dream sounds composed. “Later, Punz.”

If anyone were to ask, George isn’t under the sheets. He’s not even in the room, and if he was, he’s probably giving the worst head of his life, because Dream doesn’t sound wrecked at all, if anything he sounds calm. That won’t do, George decides. Reckless is only one way to put it, this isn’t reckless this is outright mindless, unwise and dumb, but George doesn’t claim to be smart outside of the things that matter. This, *this* is just fun.

He tightens his lips, slowly sinking down while trying to breathe out of his nose so he can take as much as possible. And he can feel Dream tense, the hand in his hair getting pushy as George lets Dream's cock fuck further into his throat. There's no better way to remind Dream of where he stands. George may be the one that worships but he is still in control.

Alarming, the roommate speaks again. "We're going now."

Dream tries to speak but he's cut off by heavy breathing. "*Later*," he repeats. And *later* George mocks. It's a funny phrase, especially when he's here with Dream resting heavy on his tongue, cock throbbing and thighs struggling not to move.

There's no later for them. As soon as those guys have left George will be going too.

It's hard to breathe under weighted sheets. George does his best not to sigh or choke, or even think too loudly with the chances of getting caught so high, but he still makes Dream feel it, knowing his lips are strung tight as he sinks down to let his nose finally brush over what lies at the base.

George can feel pre-cum on his tongue, salt mixing with his own saliva as it runs down his lips and falls to his chin. He's a mess, disgusting and still desperately trying to suck Dream's dick even with a stranger (Punz or whatever the fuck his name is) in the room. But Dream is getting off on it too. It's not as though he's stopped bucking his hips up.

"Dude, are you okay?" Punz asks, concern leaking into his tone. "Are you sick?"

"No, I'm not," Dream mutters. He sounds choked, ruined, and accompanies the words by fucking up sharply into George's throat, perhaps just to throw the other off. "Just go, I'll be out in a second."

Dream's hips are stuttering, George's mind growing foggy as he tries to bob his head in time with each feeble thrust. This is why he does this, the rush he gets and the pleasure that coils in his abdomen each time Dream decides to graze George's scalp with steady fingertips. Fun is one way to put it, but danger wraps it up far sweeter.

Adrenaline is pumping through his veins, giving him the confidence to rise back up so just the tip is resting between his lips. He's not sure how Dream is hiding it, doesn't particularly care. The only thing George wants to do is press his tongue flat against the head before sinking back down to the base, trying so successfully to make Dream gasp.

The hand in his hair stops him from doing anything else.

It pushes him down, keeps him struggling for air as Dream takes a breath like no other and acts as though George's existence is unapparent.

Punz, it seems, is relentless. "You sure?"

"Yes," Dream has to say again. "Go."

A door creaks, a voice disappears, and sure enough the sheets are thrown back and George is revealed once more. Messy; covered in his own spit and Dream's pre-cum as he's pulled off and dragged up.

"You fucking slut," Dream bites.

He doesn't even sound angry, just amused.



“You like it,” George laughs.

It’s hard to ignore the way his throat burns, the sheer size of Dream’s cock enough to leave him reeling and gagging for more. And fuck, he wants to do that again, wants Dream back in his mouth before he can forget the feeling of being moulded to the shape.

“Show me your tongue,” Dream demands, grabbing George’s waist to tug him closer.

Between their bodies, there’s Dream, hard and leaking against George’s own bare stomach. Insistent fingers travel up to his jaw, squeezing at his cheeks to force his mouth open and let his tongue hang out. Why Dream does it, George can’t tell. Perhaps it’s another display of that power he so desperately strives to keep.

“So fucking good,” Dream mutters, pushing George back almost immediately. One second he’s stable, the next he’s being dragged forwards by his hair and letting Dream spread pre-cum across his face while tapping his aching cock against his cheek. “You going to finish what you started?”

George’s voice may be hoarse but he still manages. “Yeah.”

If they both lose their minds then it’ll never be spoken of again.

---

By the time George is pulling his clothes on, it’s nearing midday.

“Going home?” Dream asks from his position on the bed. He almost looks comfortable, sitting and watching George run around his room half-naked as he tries to find his shirt.

“Yeah,” George mutters. “We have work due in a few days.”

He should have gone home hours ago, after he heard the door be slammed shut by the last of Dream’s roommates as they left for good. But caution made him stay, forced him into warm blankets and allowed him to be taken apart for a second time by careful hands while his own room stays untouched, and the outside day only grows colder.

It’s gloomy to say the least, looking as though one step through the entrance will have George tumbling downstream with the wind. Although if he sets off now then he won’t catch the worst of it, or at least that’s what he hopes.

“Oh Georgie,” Dream mutters. “Always have to show me up.”

“Doesn’t take a lot to do that,” George snaps, sitting down to pull on his socks. “You’re a dumb blond with the personality of a floorboard.”

A bitter laugh, unamused. “You’re lucky your ass is worth all of the attitude.” Dream throws him a look, an order to leave.

“Aren’t I just?”

He has to walk back. Apparently, Dream promised that he’d go pick someone up on the complete opposite side of town while George is trekking towards campus and being thrown apart by oncoming storms. Perhaps it’s for the best though, because at this time there’s sure to be people milling about with nothing better to do than start rumours that aren’t all untrue and gossip about

those they don't even know. George being seen with Dream would just do wonders for his social life. Wonders that under any other name would be titled as dark as death.

After a night of staying strangled over the floor, George's clothes are crumpled and his dignity is nowhere to be seen when he pulls them on. There's something far more vulnerable about allowing Dream to watch him dress—something that he hates to see written on his own expression even though he knows it's nothing to truly worry about.

'Fuck buddies' tend to look away when they're leaving as to not make anything seem too real. Dream doesn't have that courtesy.

The wind knocks against the window so hard it almost makes George jump, watching a tree branch hit and knock and attempt to break strong glass.

"Fuck," he curses under his breath. That won't be fun to walk in, not at all.

Lingering behind him, there's Dream, who's likely pulling on his own clothes or just watching the weather with a similar jade expression. It's silent, so quiet George can only hear himself think. Although his mind doesn't seem to work—it only comes up with bitter utterances that detail each path or street that lines the roads of his way home.

"It's bad outside?" Dream says, phrased as a question despite the fact that he quite obviously knows the answer.

"Yeah," George mutters. He turns around, comes face to face with dirty blond hair and a guy that doesn't even look at him. "I'll be going now."

He steps towards the door, pretending not to watch out of the corner of his eye as Dream steps away and towards his closet, opening it up to take something green off the rack.

And before George has the chance to question it, Dream is shoving the item straight into his hands. "Take my jacket."

For a moment, George just stares.

Shoulders pull up, dropping down so quickly that Dream can flatten his expression and gesture like there's nothing wrong with what he's saying. "So you won't be cold."

*Cold?* George wants to question. Why the fuck would Dream care if he got *cold*?

Half a glance down makes him shrink back even further. In his hands, heavy as fuck and glowing white and green with stripes and a giant number plastered across the front, is Dream's letterman. The type of letterman that everyone on the football team owns, the type that all the pretentious dicks wear when they're parading up and down the campus and acting as though they're higher than god and mightier than local law.

George wouldn't be caught dead wearing something like this.

If it weren't for the fact that the jacket feels incredibly soft and as warm as dropped, burnt matchsticks, then he wouldn't be pulling it on.

"How will you get it back?" He asks, although he doesn't really care. It's just to keep his peace of mind.

Dream waves a hand. "I'll grab it the next time I'm at yours," he says.

It makes sense. Until then, George will just keep it stashed in a box underneath his bed, another blackened secret.

“Whatever,” he mutters.

The letterman is big on him, hanging off of his body and drowning him in its fabric. Quite possibly it looks ridiculous, giant and bright fucking green, but that’s not something he’s ready to check—he’d much rather get home without being hassled by dark weather.

For just a second, a measly, quiet second, he turns to the other, opening his mouth to stumble out thanks but not being able to scrape the words off of his tongue. He doesn’t like Dream’s house, positively hates the guy himself, because even if Dream is good in bed that doesn’t make him nice. This act is just to get George to be generous again the next time he’s over, to get him free blowjobs until he’s decided that the debt of stealing a jacket has finally been paid off.

Standing still, George sours, not too sure what to say—this isn’t their normal routine after all. “Thanks, I guess.”

Dream raises an eyebrow. “Get out then.”

That’s more like it.

This time, George can’t stop himself from rolling his eyes. “Bye,” he mutters, and then he’s walking through the door before Dream can say anything back.

---

George is intercepted on his way back to the dorms.

He’s only just reached the campus and has already been ruined by the weather so his hair is standing on edge and his mood has dropped lower than it had been before. Next time, they’re having sex in George’s room, he’s has already decided, because there’s no way he’s doing that journey again.

The path under his feet is a bleaching grey, lined by the grass and winding as it runs through the buildings and leads to unknown places. At some point, George stopped looking where he was going, just following the slabs and hoping he’s in the right spot, but dumb luck can only lead him so far, he has to start trying again eventually.

Just when he starts to recognise the path, there’s someone else in front of him, barrelling forwards as though he’s the only one in existence, and George doesn’t even have the chance to step away before that guy is stopping, throwing his arms up and squinting in his very direction.

“George, right?” The guy says. He’s vaguely familiar, in such a way that George would only be able to place him if he were wearing a sign that screamed his name. Luckily, he’s given a free pass. “In my comp-sci?”

A nod. Short. “Yeah.”

For whatever reason, it’s like he’s being assessed, like the guy wants something, or to know something. The look of curiosity is in his eyes, in the way he stands just slightly above George and gazes down, eyebrows pushed together and strands of brown-black hair poking out from the hat

that's on backwards.

"Karl's been asking around for you, said he couldn't find you last night?"

*Fucking Karl.* "Well I'm here now." George shrugs. It's too early for this, for random, dumb interaction. "Just going to my dorm."

The guy tilts his head. "Not been back yet?"

"What's with the twenty questions?"

"Nothing, sorry," The guy is quick to say, rushing his words with uncertainty in his eyes. "I'll see you in class?"

If George was any better of a person then he'd smile. Instead he rolls his eyes and pretends not to notice the guy giving him an extra glance, eyes flicking up and down like he's trying to solve a puzzle no one else has ever tried. So no answer leaves his lips, and he walks off before he can be victim to any other stupid questions, doing his best to avoid anyone else that comes up on the lonely path back up to his building.

College is dumb, George has concluded. As are football players, and people that pretend to take an interest in others that they obviously don't care about, and the same goes for party-goers and the regular student body. But he doesn't have the energy to pick a fight right now. Even if he would have normally chewed out the guys that try and talk to him on Karl's dumb behalf.

At this time, George's building is fairly quiet. No one comes out of their room when he walks past, and when he's outside of his own door there's no noise that alludes to anyone else being in there, sitting or standing, talking or fighting.

So as soon as George is in his dorm, he crashes.

He can do his work later. For now, all he wants to do is sleep. Alone.

---

Taking a nap leaves George more disoriented than anything.

It's around one when he wakes up, orders Karl out to go grab them both food then collapses back into his bed just to go straight back to sleep. And the next time he stirs it's getting dark so there's no point in getting up properly and enduring a black night. So for the next several hours, George finds himself back under the covers of his bed, pretending nothing outside of his own room can ever exist.

At some point, his phone dies, like properly fully dies—with a cracked screen and a broken side from when Karl insisted Sapnap should try and juggle both their phones while balancing three hats on his head. It's a day of mourning, but George gets over it fairly quickly, he can get it fixed later.

Come Monday morning, he's still sluggish, rolled in sleep and doused in stardust only to still feel like shit as soon as he steps foot outside his dorm.

It's warmer, thankfully. No need for ten layers of wool or woven fabrics, and George doesn't feel regret as soon as the wind crosses his path, but he still bites back a frown. Karl is by his side,

pushing into his coat for warmth and begging George to stand a little closer so the body heat can share. George says no though. He's too tired to be pretending he's fine with physical touch right now.

Sure enough, after battle and cry, George finds himself nearing his building, trying not to scoff at the neatly painted sign that hangs above the door to remind everyone of where they are.

George's computer science class is small. The professor always shows up ten minutes late, with a mug of coffee that he brought from home and a dozen scarves wrapped around his neck no matter the weather. On the first day, George took a seat towards the back, dumping his stuff out like he had a single point to prove, and he'd talked to the person next to him for approximately five minutes before deciding that he wasn't worth his time.

Perhaps that's why George isn't popular. He doesn't put the effort in to be liked.

Still, the class is small and the syllabus is dull. Interesting only to the people that have been reading comp-sci books since they were fourteen. Luckily, George is one of those people, which means that walking into his class, Karl by his side, has never held the stress that other classes have. The professor loves him, of course it's easy.

And yet, somehow, today it doesn't feel as welcoming.

"Karl, why is everyone staring at you?" George asks, frenzy creeping into his tone as a thousand eyes leave red marks where they rest.

They're barely one step through the door, George going first as the other follows behind, and usually no one gives a shit. They all go along with their days as though George doesn't exist, but right now they're staring. Right now they're staring and quite frankly, it's freaking him out.

"I don't know," Karl mumbles. "Just go sit down."

There are more empty seats than usual, the professor still not here no matter how late it's getting. And he walks past them with Karl knocking at his heels, trying to wave at the people who can't seem to stop staring as he practically throws his things on the desk, sitting with a face so red it's like the edges have been burned.

Peace is interrupted after five minutes. George tries not to scowl.

A girl turns around, blonde hair tucked up neatly into a ponytail that swings when she shakes her head. She's grinning, holding back a laugh when she turns away from her friends and throws them a glance, one laced with green and all things dangerous. Karl might know her, he's smiling as though he does, still, George has never talked to her before in his life.

"George?" She asks, almost as though she's just checking a fact, making sure she even has the right person.

He throws a glance to Karl, earning raised eyebrows in response.

Confusion. "Yeah?"

Although George can be a bit of a bitch sometimes, he's never been one for confrontation. The way jade eyes peer through him makes him sour, shrink back a little in case there's something bad to be said, and this isn't normal, people don't just come up to him and speak to him, so to say he's a little on edge would be an understatement.

The girl laughs, chokes it on the back of her hand then lets her eyes roam over the other.

*Spit it out already*, screams the voice at the back of George's mind. And yet when it finally happens he regrets wishing for such a thing almost immediately.

Six words. That's all it takes for George's world to come tumbling down.

"Are you and Dream *actually* dating?"

## Chapter End Notes

comments/kudos are so so appreciated and really make my day!!

[my twitter](#)

[playlist for this fic](#)

starting a new au is so much fun and i already love what i have planned for this fic so hey, don't be a stranger and if you like my writing maybe check out my other stuff <33 hope u guys enjoyed!

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

“You’re keeping something from me.”

“What?” Dream scoffs. If George didn’t know any better then he’d say he’s nervous.

“No I’m not.”

“Yes, you are,” he presses, stepping closer, closer until the backs of Dream’s knees hit the desk, closer until they’re standing pressed against one another. “What is it?”

### Chapter Notes

thank u to [toast](#) and [kat](#) for beta-ing!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The first time that George met Dream, he almost liked him.

Key word: almost.

It was the first and only party that George has ever been to—courtesy of Karl, who at that point hadn’t realised that he would rather be doing anything else. And it was awful; the music was loud, the people were obnoxious, and with it being the first time George had entered Sapnap’s house share situation too, he’d gotten lost within the first five minutes.

And then he found Dream.

A slightly familiar face being that they were both in the same Computer Science class, and upon the first real glance, George had found him attractive. Dirty blond hair and muscle that peeked out across his arms, running down his chest and becoming so much more evident when he lifted a hand to card through sandy locks—of course he was hooked. Even when Dream was shirtless with a cowboy hat on his head and throwing eggs out of a smashed window, George couldn’t find it in himself to look away.

The other was undignified, sure, and maybe even a little immature, but attractive. George has never prided himself on having good taste.

Dream was sweet to him for five minutes tops, cherry compliments and a smile that glimmered under flashing light, and George had humoured him up right up until he suggested they went upstairs to his bedroom, touching his chest, then his arm and trying to hide the roll of his eyes when George didn’t drop to his knees right that instant.

And that’s when he realised the most important piece of information—that Dream is only nice when he wants to be, and that guys like that aren’t something George ever wants to be involved with.

So “*No*,” is what George had said.

And “*No?*” is how Dream responded, gobsmacked and offended and looking like he couldn’t understand what he was being told.

Then ten minutes later he was putting those same moves on someone else, and that’s when George decided that he really didn’t like the other—could even learn to hate him.

So now, when he’s secretly been fucking him for months and everyone seems to know, George is a little insulted to say the least.

“So *are* you guys dating?” Karl asks from his position sprawled out on his bed.

He stumbled in yesterday from some party with the notion on his lips, curiosity peaking in eager eyes like he truly believed that the other was hiding something from him. It was word after word, accusation after accusation, and after putting him to bed with tensing hands, George spent half an hour wondering if Karl really thinks that low of him and the other half fighting off the urge to message Dream and ask if he knows how it came to be.

Him and Dream *dating*, god the words turn sour on his tongue before he can even say them. But if George’s distaste isn’t obvious in his screwed up expression he makes sure Karl knows if with something more obvious. “No.”

“Everyone thinks you are,” Karl muses.

There’s a lift to his tone that George can’t quite distinguish, a grin on his face that screams nothing but danger.

Still, he just shrugs. “Not everyone.”

“I’d say everyone.”

He raises an eyebrow. *That can’t be good.* “What does that mean?”

“Nothing?”

George’s tone is accusatory. “Karl?”

“*Nothing.*” The other throws up his hands, shaking his head like George is the one being dramatic. “People talk, that’s all.”

“Well, those people are wrong.”

Quiet rings for just a second, George’s tone still spiralling harsh in the air. Since his first class that week (the one which Dream conveniently didn’t show up for), he’s had multiple people whose names he doesn’t even know come up to him and try to pry false information from between his lips.

“*Are you dating Dream?*” “*How long have you and Dream been together?*” “*Since when were you guys a thing?*” Every iteration of the question makes George want to scream, because before this, not in a million years would anybody ever believe that George of all people would be dating the fucking football captain, but now it’s all anybody can talk about. Like high school 2.0, full of fake rumours and enough gossip to make him want to rip out each strand of chestnut hair.

He doesn’t like Dream, just because everyone else seems to feel the need to worship the ground



that he walks on, that doesn't mean that George has to too. Because Dream is *not* his type. George isn't into assholes that only care about sex and looking good when they're running across a field with a ball in their arms. He's a little less shallow than that.

Besides, dating is not his thing. No matter how many times Karl tells him that getting out and finding someone like that would do him some good.

(Sometimes, George feels as though Karl thinks that he's pathetic in his isolated ways.)

The textbook in his hands is getting bent by the way he grips it, tight, harsh, like if he hurts the pages it'll make everyone else in existence go away too. But he forces himself to relax after just one second, because there's no use in getting angry about something that isn't even true—something that doesn't even matter.

"There's a party tonight," Karl says. A filler, mindless words that come tumbling from between his lips as though he's been waiting for the right time to let them loose. "Do you want to come?"

"Didn't you go to a party yesterday?"

"Yes," Karl admits, stifling his true expression. "But there's no harm in going two nights in a row."

There is harm. There's the fact that Karl hasn't picked up a book since he first bought them, there's the chance that he's going to end up dropping out because he's too busy partying to give a fuck about how he's doing in class. And he might not care but George does. He'll study enough for the both of them.

Things like parties don't fit into that schedule.

"I still don't want to go," he grumbles, shoving his things to the side to make room for his legs.

Karl's eyes are still on him, running over George's hunched frame and fluffed hair, keeping that air of obscurity in his every move like the dishevelment of the night hasn't really caught up with him. How he does it all, George can't understand. Balance a boyfriend and a social life, all with charm and enough recharge to go and do it again the next day.

Jealousy isn't the word for it because George isn't jealous, but those whispers of green envy and jaded annoyance can still get to him when he sleeps. When he's waiting for his best friend to come back far into the night with nothing else to do.

Still, George doesn't want to change—it's not as though he needs to.

Teasing is bright in Karl's eyes. "Your boyfriend might be there," he hums, bracing himself for the ultimate throw of a pillow. He's uncaring like that, says shit that he knows the other won't like just because he thinks it's funny, and usually, when George is in on it it's great, but right now all he wants to do is yell.

"He's not my boyfriend," he scoffs. "I wouldn't date that dick if he was the last guy on earth."

"Sure you wouldn't."

It's like he thinks he knows something that George doesn't, wearing a smile that's so cocksure it doesn't fit snugly on his features. But before there's space to protest, space for George to tell Karl he's just being dumb in that inelegant, crude fashion he so desperately loves, the other is standing up, shrugging away his gaze and wandering towards his closet.

“You should come,” Karl offers, dropping his mocking tone so he can bring up the possibility once again. “I have things you could wear.”

Times like this are draining.

“The answer’s still no.”

“Okay,” Karl mutters, again, again, like he does every night when they’re in this same, broken position.

It’d almost be comforting, familiar in a sense, except for some reason George can’t force himself to sit still.

Rumours get to him in a way that can’t be explained. They’re toxicity—dumb made up lies that are only introduced because people don’t understand that they can get their fun from things that don’t involve other’s lives. And he thought he saw the last of it in England, when he was sixteen saying goodbye to high school and then eighteen waving his last regards to college.

But now he’s here, in America of all places, still being subjected to the pettiness of people that can’t get out of their own heads.

Sometimes, George wishes he never even moved.

---

By the time Karl leaves it’s getting late.

Late, as in nearing eleven, when the sun is down and all respectable people are tucking themselves into bed or wrapping up the studying that they were surely doing. But for Karl, for George’s roommate of all people, the night is only just beginning.

Whose party it is, George doesn’t know. He didn’t bother to ask, just shot down countless offers and then busied himself behind his phone with an open chat and steadily shaking fingers. It’s stupid, to be typing and then backspacing a message to a guy who he’s never had to call aside from when he’s inviting him over to hook up. But now George wants answers, and the only way he’s going to get them is if he asks the second source.

The way that Karl inches towards the door is in no way discreet, still, George pretends not to notice. Too preoccupied with figuring out how to ask Dream if he knows why people know that they’re screwing all of a sudden, to send a condescending remark in his roommate’s direction and tell him to be home by midnight.

He just needs to know *why*. Why would people ever believe a rumour that dumb, and why the fuck is it still spiralling without being stopped? Because no matter how many times George has replied with furrowed brows and an upturned nose, no one seems to believe him, instead they all bat away his answer like he—the one it’s all about—doesn’t know best.

Talking to Dream will be hell. Outside of their whole situation, George would rather stand on pins or burn his hands in a curling white fire than seek the other out voluntarily. But this isn’t a normal day. It’s Wednesday fucking night and he’s trapped in a rumour with his least favourite person.

**George:** *I’m coming over*

A response is instantaneous.

***Dream:*** *No you're not*

Sometimes Dream likes to play hard to get. He says things he doesn't mean because he wants to make George work, and if he were in a bit of a better mood then maybe he'd be sweeter with his texts, typing out words that'll be read dirty by shielded eyes, but as of right now, George isn't feeling generous. So the best that Dream will get is a barely there picture of his v-line and hands that threaten to dip.

***George:*** *image attached*

It's a weak attempt but George really isn't in the mood. He just needs to talk.

***George:*** *You sure about that?*

And as expected, Dream is just a man.

***Dream:*** *Roommates are out, I'll leave the door open*

---

When George arrives, he's dragged through the hallway.

Getting here was a mess; the weather was against him, the people that passed all gave him a glance up and down as though they knew exactly where he was going. And all they managed to do was put a bit more passion into George's steps, a bit more bitterness under his belt alongside the amount he's been harbouring for days. So as soon as he's knocking on the door with hard, cracking knuckles, the first sight of the other's face makes him want to punch.

Dream though, Dream is different. He's half-hard, grabbing at George's ass to grind against him before he's even managed to close the door, and *fuck* George doesn't know what's gotten into the other but the way he's already trying to slide cold hands up his shirt is enough to make him wish he didn't have a real reason to be here.

"Off," Dream pants. His skin is tacky, hot to the touch, and already his nose is against George's neck, lips doing their best not to brand and bite all while George just *melts*.

"Fuck," he groans. He's here for a reason, a real reason, a—

Dream's strong, god he's probably the strongest guy that George has ever been with, because he grabs him with ease and pushes his hands under his thighs to pick him up and rest him on the counter of a table that George has never been around long enough to know.

These movements are frantic, they're rushed and they're quick, and George is wrapping his legs around Dream's waist and letting his body push them further apart before he knows it. Thighs pressed together, limbs intertwined. He needs to push away, needs to stop this before it gets too far, but he can't. Not yet.

"Fuck," he bites, against the air, against Dream's neck.

His hands find the other's chest, pushing, pushing, weak because he doesn't really mean it and

helpless because he never wants it to stop. But the sounds of curdled laughs and accusatory tones find their way back to his ears, and that realisation of why he's actually here comes straight back, strong and powerful, and Dream needs to start providing answers before George just fucking snaps.

"Why the fuck does everyone think we're dating?" He finally manages—a harsh shove pushed against Dream's shoulders that sends him reeling back with bitten lips and dark features.

"What are you talking about?" Dream bites.

He's pissed, George can tell, annoyed about being left hard in his sweatpants while George brushes himself off, stands, and glares up at him with pure distaste.

"Everyone thinks we're dating," he clarifies.

If Dream really doesn't know that then he must live under a bigger rock than George.

"No they don't."

"Yes," George starts, jamming a finger against the other's chest. "They do."

"Well they're wrong." Dream has the audacity to shrug—to *shrug* and act like George is being irrational. "So who cares?"

*Everyone*, George wants to yell, because he hasn't gone through the countless, distasteful questions and dozens of judgemental glares for the last few days just for Dream to dismiss it like nothing has actually changed. Even if this hasn't impacted a thing between them, it's certainly changed the way people speak to him. How they look at him when he walks past while thinking he's really enough of an idiot to date someone as flakey as Dream.

Of course they're wrong. Never in a million years would George even consider looking at the other in a way that isn't fuelled by hate and nothing less. Once, he may have considered it, sure, but now, when he stands staring up through green speckled lenses, seeing a man that couldn't give less of a shit about the way George feels, glaring back, he knows twisted rumours can never be right.

And yet the people that spin such tall tales don't believe it.

They just think this is another fun secret that they can latch onto like it isn't driving George up the wall. So he can't stop his tone from being short, can't stop his voice from coming out sharp, and harsh, and loud enough for the ring to shatter already broken eardrums.

"Me," he exclaims. Arms are thrown up, eyes are wide with red, blistering anger. "I care, because I'm not having people think I'm dating an asshole like you."

It's not just George's reputation on the line, it's his dignity.

"No one actually believes it," Dream huffs, rolling his eyes as if this is all beneath him.

"They do."

"They should know you're not my type."

"Holy shit, you're missing the point."

"It's fine." Dream waves a hand in the air, trying to bat away George's worries and just forcing them to come back stronger, because it's not fine. George has already had to speak about this situation to far more people than he would have liked to, and he doesn't trust Karl not to try and get

his hands on his phone to relay the information back to his family too. “There’s no harm in a rumour.”

“For you maybe,” George frowns. Why can’t Dream just understand? Not everyone gets their highs from the amount of times their name has been circled around campus.

“Fucking hell, get over it.”

For a moment he considers leaving, simply turning around and tugging his clothes back into place—without a second thought as to how the action will come across. But no, George doesn’t give up that easily, and Dream’s going to talk or else.

He crosses his arms.

“We’re not having sex until I know why the rumour started.”

The way Dream’s jaw drops should be comical.

“*What?*” He almost yells. “How is that fair?”

“It’s not,” George shrugs. “But you’re still hard so if you’re wanting me to do anything about it, I’d start talking.”

Dream knows something, he can tell.

It’s evident in the way his eyes dance around the room, never landing on one spot for too long, skittish as though even the walls have something to say. It’s made clear from how he never says enough, drops his sentences too early like George can fill in the blanks, and those signs aren’t misleading, no, Dream has to know something. Otherwise, George will never understand why he isn’t equally as outraged.

Seconds pass. One. Two. Dream doesn’t say a single thing for the fear of it coming out muddled. The way his features scrunch, not cocksure or confident but just as hateable as they always are, tell all. And by the end of today, George is going to need to retire back to his room for good, because quite frankly, confrontation isn’t something he’s cut out for.

Eventually, the words come out soft from Dream’s tongue. “Someone saw you wearing my letterman.”

And then it all clicks.

“They’ll forget pretty soon,” he continues, avoiding eye contact like a singular glance could cause him more than pain. “It’s probably better to ignore it though. If we don’t, more people will believe it, y’know.”

There’s more to the story; George doesn’t push.

“Fine,” he mutters.

He should have burned that jacket the second he got back to his dorm, should’ve checked the weather and brought his own to stop it from even happening, but there’s no changing the past. What’s done is done, and George will just have to cope with it.

“We still shouldn’t have sex anymore,” he tries, cringing at how meekness has crept into his tone.

It's not what he wants of course, sex with Dream is fucking amazing, it always has been, but if people see them sneaking off into each other's rooms then they're going to catch the wrong idea.

Although, he isn't too sure what the right one would be.

Right now, Dream could kick him out, tell George to just leave then if he isn't going to do what he came here to, but he doesn't. What Dream does however, is stand, in the centre of the kitchen, in his own house, and disagree. "Yes we should."

"It'll be too obvious."

"No it won't." A groan, like the notion is too stupid to even humour. If Dream wanted, he could probably have anyone he wishes in his bed with just a few tempting words, so why he's so hung up on making sure George isn't the one to walk away, is slightly concerning. "No one that matters knows. We can still do our thing."

Nothing.

When he gets no answer, he just huffs.

"I really want to fuck you right now George."

The words elicit a scoff. They force the other to shake his head and take a step forward into Dream's space, crowding him back, burning him with sharpened irises.

It's too crude. Vulgar. If Dream weren't the football captain, then more people would see him as the asshole that he is.

"You're disgusting."

"Shut up," Dream grumbles. He knows how to turn George to putty, place his hands strong on his hips and look down at him with that crystal reminder that he has him. Dream has been having him, in his bed, begging, for the better half of these lonely months. "I hate your voice."

It can't happen anymore though. It just can't, right? Or is George really overreacting and ruining the only outing he ever gets because a bit of gossip has gotten around. Nevertheless, his mind's still reeling, slowly turning quiet when Dream holds the nape of his neck, splaying his fingers across the small of his back in the way he knows George can't stand.

Loose lips and stuttering chests form George's sentences. This isn't nerves, it's scare, but even then, those feelings are being rolled away.

"None of your friends think it's true, right? Because I know Karl's been hounding me all week."

"They're cool," Dream mutters, an answer wrapped up in the absence of one.

If George were paying more attention then he'd question it, ask what on earth Dream could mean, but before he has the chance he's being guided back towards the stairwell, ushered up and not thinking a thing of the way he's being handled.

"Why are you still dressed?" Dream asks, whispered, hushed, turning warm bodies until it's his chest against the others back and they're walking as one.

Those lips, cherry red and so easily urged open, are pressed against George's neck, uncaring for the fact that just before, they've argued the dangers of this very thing.

Strength comes in subtle waves though, coursing through George's bones to let him stutter out his plea. "We aren't having sex right now."

"Why not?" Dream asks. "You're here."

Here in his house, here being guided into his room, here being desperate and dumb and allowing himself to be ruined.

"Because we're talking." Even to his own ears, it sounds weak.

He wants to stop thinking, wants to let it all happen, but there are too many thoughts nagging at the back of his mind for him to let it go by so easily. Then again, Dream's hand is brushing over the waistband of his pants, trying to dip underneath the fabric, and then under another so he can hold hip bones and skin and so, so much more.

"We've talked," he says, lifting his tone to make it light. "Rumours happen all the time, this isn't high school, people will forget."

"Not this."

Dream pulls George's hips back in a way so sure it's like he knows the other will shiver—bleeding confidence as though he's aware of the fact that the other is too weak to pull away.

"They will," he says. The weight of his nose comes down against the back of George's head, heavy and resting, keeping him in place. "C'mon, get on the bed."

And maybe he's right.

This isn't the end of the world, it isn't purgatory. This is sex, just sex. People that despise each other in a fashion that's so obvious anyone that looks for half a second will be able to tell, touching each other with hands born to sin and smiles crafted by the purest of hate.

This isn't the end of the world. It's George allowing his shirt to be pulled off and for Dream to cast him down against sullen sheets, hands, hands, hands. It's dirty, filthy, and *fuck*, those lips grinning up at him feels so good.

It's not the end of the world.

Against his better judgement, George obliges.

---

It's nearing two a.m. when George gets around to leaving.

It wasn't his best moment, the way he'd tossed and turned his head against scratchy pillows, allowing himself to be taken apart so easily—begging, pleading for more while Dream just fucking *laughed*, but the house was empty. Dream told him to be loud, practically shaped him to be.

The fact that his legs still work is a miracle in itself. After a night like that, George wouldn't have been surprised if he tried to stand up and his muscles gave way, but he's fine, limping slightly and feeling the starts of bruises forming on the backs of his thighs, but fine.

Pulling on his own clothes takes too much effort. It's only made worse by how Dream mocks his

disgruntled look and attempts to knock him off his feet just for the sake of it. After sex, they're always weird, different because they have no use for each other anymore, but Dream still manages to be his same, horrific self, and George still manages to hate it.

"You need a lift?" Dream asks, carding his fingers through his hair as he opens the bedroom door.

"Obviously," George mutters. "I'm not walking home in the dark."

"Yeah someone you've pissed off might be out looking for revenge."

"I wish. Then I'd never have to talk to *you* again."

The walls of this house are tall. How on earth a group of college students managed to afford it is far beyond George's understanding, but for all he knows Dream's family could secretly be rich, or famous. Evidently they're dumb enough to let their son run wild in a home of his own either way.

It's not clean in the way George ensures his own dorm is. In place of books or organised papers, there are clothes and scattered items—the result of those who don't care about the space in which they live. If it weren't night, and George's senses weren't dulled by his slowing muscles, then he'd surely have more to complain about, but right now he's not feeling up to it.

It's been a long week; all he wants is peace.

The car keys jingle in Dream's grip as the two wander down the stairs, walking into the open space ahead, and just as George is about to turn to the side and make a jab at something that surely doesn't matter, something unfamiliar takes the breath straight from his lungs.

"George?" a third voice says. "Dream?"

George can feel his blood run cold.

After all that, after everything they've talked about, he's been caught sneaking out at two am once more.

How are they going to explain this? How long have they even been here? Because if it was any longer than five minutes then they would have heard the heights of George's voice and the lows of his final fall.

Against his own will, George's feet stay glued to the floor, forcing him to stay motionless as he looks up at the man on his right and tries to pretend he isn't terrified.

Dream however, does not need to pretend.

"Sapnap," he greets, a smile slapped on his face as he wanders forward to clap the third on the back. They're hugging, smiling, acting like this is normal, all while George continues to stare. "You're home early."

"I am," Sapnap says. His fucking face, smug, smiling, George wants to beat him into the ground. "You guys seem to be having fun."

But he can't do that when he's blushing, burning red despite himself at an *eyebrow wiggle*.

Sapnap heard. He definitely heard.

All George wishes is for the ground to swallow him whole.



Dream, it seems, has not got that memo. “What can I say?” He brags, flashing sharp canines when he twists his lips into a grin. “I’ve got magical hands.”

What the fuck?

George feels like throwing something.

This has to be a joke, this has got to be the universe deciding to play a fun trick on him, because there is no way in hell that *Sapnap*, Karl’s *boyfriend*, is standing in the middle of the kitchen, shoes kicked off and keys in his hands as though he just came back from the party that George had already refused to go to, and is making jokes with Dream like this is normal.

Just earlier, he was being told that his friends didn’t know about the rumour, perhaps in a few less words, but still, that’s what George had believed. Now, Sapnap is giving the two of them a thumbs up, nodding and just shaking off the tension in the room like it’s the regular air.

Two a.m.; dead in the night and watching falling stars. Why is Dream just letting this happen?

Maybe it’s because this does not look like ‘not knowing,’ this looks like knowing and not giving a single fuck.

Or if this is a genuine reaction, an unrehearsed realisation that Dream and George are in fact fucking, then it’s slightly disappointing.

George at least wanted a bit of shock. It could have been nice?

“Magical is one way to put it.” Sapnap is disgusting. Alongside the rest of the football team, George hates him. “You guys come for food or something?”

“No, just dropping him home. Long day and all.”

“He’s not staying the night?”

They talk about him like he isn’t even there, like this is a regular occurrence in their household. And George doesn’t know if bringing random hook-ups down the stairs at two in the morning is, but if that’s true then he and Dream are going to have a few choice words about safe-sex later.

“No. George here insisted on sleeping in his own bed tonight.”

There are no words to describe the expression that George wears—it’s tired, confused, and so completely blank that there’s no use in trying to fix it.

What part of the word ‘secret’ does Dream not understand? People aren’t meant to know this sort of stuff, it’s meant to just be between them, as sour as that is to admit. The filter isn’t lost as soon as the clock strikes midnight, they could have been doing anything in Dream’s room. Presuming that they had to be having sex is quite frankly an awfully crude assumption.

Two people that hate each other are allowed to just *talk*. Sapnap should be able to understand that.

(Still, added to the list of reasons why George can’t stand Dream: in front of his friends, the only thing he knows how to do is brag, no matter how uncomfortable the other parties involved feel about it.)

When he clocks back in, he hears laughter, whether at his expense or not, loud and boisterous and enough to make his ears hurt. This is too much. It’s stomach churning and difficult to handle, but

George has to bear the brunt of it while everybody acts like a meeting in the middle of the night, with Dream and the guy he's only rumoured to know, is the most normal thing they've seen all week.

*This is going to get back to Karl.*

The thought only makes the situation that much worse. Only earlier that night was he battling off accusations of this very scenario, now he's probably screwed for good.

So before this can get any further, he's grabbing at Dream's arm, pulling him away and into the corner of a closed room while Sapnap just watches.

"What the fuck are you doing?" He mutters, glaring now and keeping his voice so low that he'll never be heard. He's jabbing his finger towards Dream's chest, ignoring the tired look he gets in response because he'll deal with yelling tomorrow, when he has more energy to deal it back and has shaken off these odd events. "Don't say that shit, what is wrong with you? Rule number one, we don't tell people that we're having sex."

"You were in my room moaning ten minutes ago, he knows."

"No he doesn't."

Frustration bubbles up in spiked red. George doesn't care how dumb his sentences seems, all he cares about is getting out of this stifling situation and never having to deal with it again. Not to Karl, not to Sapnap and certainly not to random strangers. They'll forget, sure, but that would be a lot easier if they weren't joking about the whole ordeal with people that aren't aware it isn't a joke.

"Tell him we were studying or something, passing notes. I'm not having you slander my fucking name by putting it next to yours."

Dream looks at him as though he's stupid. "He's not going to believe that."

"I don't care."

The curl of his tone is harsh, sharp and cutting and loud enough that from across the room, Sapnap can most likely hear.

Talking to Dream is like talking to a brick wall (except, even a brick wall could be more accommodating) because he just doesn't listen. It's like he's so used to being the one in the centre of a room, in charge and at the top, that the thought of someone else, someone as measly as George, biting back is all it takes for him to snap.

"There's a reason no one likes you, you know?"

The words take George by surprise. Although, in some sick sense it makes him giddy to hear them echo from between the others' lips.

"And why's that?"

"You're bossy," Dream states, like a fact, nothing less. "Demanding."

As if to prove his point, George smiles. "Tell him."

---

Ten minutes later and George is still there.

He doesn't know how or why but he's standing on the edge of an awkward conversation, letting it tip over into three a.m. and not knowing how exactly he's meant to leave.

"Sorry to disappoint," Dream had said, hands up in the air while he was glared at with daggered eyes. "Me and George just had some notes to share—since I couldn't make it to class and all."

"Right."

And it wasn't that hard, it was barely even a scratch on the surface since the other so obviously didn't believe it, so George can't understand why the other is so calm. He shouldn't be, he shouldn't just accept that this is happening.

Even as they walk to the door, not together, not shoulder to shoulder, but next to each other, the thought swims through his mind—like infection seeking out a wound.

And before he can stop himself, he's asking the question he's wanted to know ever since he arrived. "Why are you not freaking out?"

"What?"

"Your best friend is under the impression that we're having sex," George snaps.

It would only be right for Dream to be upset and yet he's not, he's strangely at ease with the idea.

"Well he's not wrong."

"*Dream.*"

"Because we aren't dating," he shrugs, as though it explains it all. "And I'll tell anyone else who asks that we aren't, too. It doesn't bother me because no one cares about if I'm with you. You aren't exactly a hot topic, you're just George, y'know."

George does know. And yet Dream's words don't manage to make him feel any better. Misguidedly, Dream interprets his silence for an indication to go on.

"Don't worry," he grumbles, barely even looking at the other. "I'll talk to Sap later—say we were watching porn or something."

"Like that's any better." George scowls, unable to keep the expression off his face. "Fine, whatever. But under no circumstances do I want anybody else thinking I'm having sex with you either."

"You're such a bitch."

It's like Dream knows exactly what to do to make George reel. "Shut the fuck up."

"I'm not driving you," Dream decides bitterly. "You can come back when you don't have a stick up your ass."

"What do you mean you're not driving me?"

"I don't want to." A shrug, like it's not three a.m. and too dark to even see the streets. "You can

walk.”

It’s petty and it’s rude, but what else could he expect from Dream of all people. Dream, who’s never given a shit about anybody else in his entire life, Dream who thinks that it’s fine for George’s name to be spread throughout campus just because he isn’t popular enough for anybody to care for more than a week.

And thank god that there he might have a point, because if one more person finds out that there’s some truth to such a lie then George doesn’t know how he would handle it (his ego definitely wouldn’t).

By the time he’s at the door, his mood has dropped to zero.

“George, do you want to stay and watch a movie?” Sapnap asks, beckoning him over like he’s some dog, like he doesn’t have better places to be. “Karl’s coming over.”

“No.”

“Really?” He has the audacity to look confused. “Not even with Dreamie over here.”

Quite honestly, that makes him want to stay even less. “I’d rather die.”

The look Dream gets is scolding. Any other day he’d be getting cursed out, but right now tiredness is what’s keeping the other running. He purely doesn’t have the energy to bite.

His hand is on the door, twisting the handle until it opens up until he’s met with the night sky and—

What the fuck?

“George?” Punz asks, puzzle in his tone where he stands with a pizza box in hand and a can of soda in the other. He looks up, past him, towards Dream and Sapnap (who’s laughter isn’t at all obvious). “What is he doing here?”

He can’t do this. Not today, not anymore, and without another word George is shoving past him and into the cold of the night, scoffing when he hears the other grunt.

“He’s leaving?” He can hear Punz ask, because the door hasn’t closed. No, apparently no one in that house cares about privacy or making their guests not feel like zoo animals.

“Yep.”

Then there’s Punz again, clear as day. “What’s going on?”

“Dreamie got curved,” Sapnap answers.

This is their home and George is pretending that he’s not inching down the driveway, far too nosey for his own good. The night will shield him from their prying eyes, most likely they don’t even know that he’s still here, and that’s the only thing that gives him hope. If they can forget his existence that quickly, then hopefully, come morning, they’ll have erased his name from their memories indefinitely.

“Really?”

“No I did not,” Dream scoffs.

“Dude you totally did.”

George isn't a topic of conversation. Sapnap shouldn't be cool with him coming out of Dream's room, dusted in embarrassment and unsure of what to say. That's just not how things are meant to go.

They hate each other, that's common knowledge, and one, pretty baseless, rumour shouldn't change that. Especially since George has been so adamantly denying the whole affair the entire time. Besides, Dream has his type, everyone knows that. He likes cheerleaders, girls, gorgeous ones that can hang off his side and laugh at his every joke. And everyone that's close to him knows it. Hell, George even knows it.

So the only thing he can ask, when he's cold and alone and walking down the street, is how was George squashed into that box? How does even *Sapnap* think that could be possible?

---

George is sitting in a café when the next *odd* thing happens.

He's barely awake, too sluggish to get his muscles to move and force him up off of the seat that he's been occupying for almost an hour. All despite the fact that his coffee is cold and how he barely even likes coffee in the first place.

It's been two days since he last talked to Dream, one since he last talked to Karl, considering how skilfully he's been avoiding him ever since the events of the last few days. And in that time period all he's been doing is running around campus, dodging the (fewer) people that have come up to talk to him, and pretending that nothing is even wrong.

(If he doesn't rise to it, then it'll go away—that's what he's been telling himself.)

And so far it seems to be working.

If people have their assumptions then they've been keeping them to themselves, talking in secret and letting George be, and for that he's grateful. Or at least he was, because even if some people have manners, others definitely don't.

"Dream's boyfriend, right?"

*Not again.*

Annoyance and confusion go hand in hand, the disbelief that people really still believe such mindless gossip, enough to make George's head ring.

"What?"

"It's nice to meet you."

He glances up, frowning. It's too early for this. "Do you need something?"

Brunette, tall, undoubtedly pretty with freckles cast over her nose and dotting along the heights of her cheeks, and just from the way she holds herself, George can tell she's popular. Nevertheless, he's never seen her before in his life.

She stands in front of him with her arms crossed, a cocky smile on her lips and a tilt to her head that reads nothing more than condescending. "I'm Bella," she says, pushing a hand forwards like she

really thinks George will shake it. “Him and I used to date.”

George just stares. “Nice.”

“When I heard he was back in the dating pool I was shocked,” she continues, rattling on like he gives a shit, like this is information George actually wants to know. “I really didn’t think he’d find anyone that would put up with that attitude.”

*He hasn’t*, George wants to say, but he is not in the mood for an argument right now. He’s too tired to put up his best fight.

So “Okay,” is all he says, picking up his cup with cold, tensing hands and flashing her the fakest of smiles so he can at least keep up the appearance of being annoyed. “I’m going now.”

“It was lovely meeting you.”

“I wish I could say the same.”

---

Staying in his dorm and never wandering out isn’t a new concept for George, not at all.

Time alone is when he can recharge, take a step back and either catch up with the things he didn’t quite understand in class, or some well deserved sleep. And having company isn’t always welcome, but on very rare occasions (when he’s been frustrated all week, and staying up late into the night stressing about his name on people’s lips) it is.

Which means that his roommate’s common affliction for going out annoys him far more than it should.

“Where are you going?” George asks, under blankets and sheets, a frown on his face when he looks across the room.

“Dinner,” Karl tells him, shrugging on a jacket that’s too small to be his own. “The football team does them every so often.”

“You’re not on the football team.”

“No, but Sap is.” Karl smiles. “You could come if you want, *Dream* will probably be there too.”

George is throwing a textbook at his head before he can make the effort to dodge.

It’s like he can never catch a break. Everywhere he goes there’s a reminder of the faces he never wants to see, a completely fake piece of information that’s currently ruining his life. And with the last few days in mind, George has realised that being confused is far worse than knowing and hating all, meaning that Dream and his near complete lack of information is starting to get on his nerves.

“Does this mean you’ll be gone all night?”

He knows the answer—it’s so obvious to see—made clearer by how Karl tips his head back with amber-lined ease, letting a laugh drip like syrup sweet from his tongue. In front of the doorway, again, out for not the first time this week, he looks at home, happy, like being doused in the

warmth of others (their touch, their smiles, their words) is never something that he fears. In fact, he enjoys it all.

The only expression that George can keep is a scowl, something fitted so perfectly to his features that it's the only face that ever feels normal. He isn't upset, or sad, or anything of the sort, but the creases of his sweater, the way his skin is cold to the touch and his eyes ache silently behind their sockets, feels wrong. Like one more word will be enough to tip him over the edge.

"Don't stay up too late," Karl says, lit up by the glow of a screen. "Love you."

And George doesn't return the words—the light is too bright, and the room is too small for him to utter them out and not feel like he's rubbing salt in the corners of cracked lips.

"Bye Karl," he says instead.

He has no messages on his phone to answer. His work was completed on his first day of hiding. All he can do is sit and sulk, cursing out he-who-will-not-be-named for even daring to blur the line between a rumour and reality.

If Sapnap gives him a wave when he comes to the door, points finger guns in George's direction and then whispers something into Karl's ear when they walk out, then George pretends he doesn't see it.

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One day, George finally decides that he's allowed to go outside again.

One day meaning the next day, when Karl crawls in at 8 a.m. with greasy hair and wide eyes that struggle to stay open despite all of his best attempts. He's loud when he's like this, slightly annoying and less talkative than usual, only opening his mouth to rattle off demands that George feels bad enough to follow. And when he finally requests something to eat, shoving his wallet into George's hands and telling him to go get him something from the nearest café, George actually accepts—figuring that now is as good a time as any to get his daily exercise.

His first stop is the little store just off campus, where they sell bagels so good it'd be a sin for him not to buy one each time he goes in. He gets two, taps Karl's card on the machine and adds a drink while he's at it (it's not his money, he might as well) and then he's off down the streets, a brown paper bag in one hand and his receipt in the other.

He dodges all the people he can, narrowly being missed by a crowd of five as they barrel down the roads and lead him straight back onto campus. His back hits the side of a stairwell when he goes to climb, expanding lungs stuttering as they try to keep up with his stride, and he's walked this path so many times that it's engraved into his memory, easy to follow without even having to look.

By the time he's back in his building, so close to his door and yet hasn't quite made it, George can hear the growl of his own stomach, loud as it takes him by surprise. There's food in his hands, sure, but also he has Karl's wallet and a vending machine at the end of his floor. So he can get himself a little something extra—he deserves it for being such a good friend after all.

Watercolour hands tap on the glass of the vending machine, a lone finger running over the selections and their individual prices. Typically when making simple choices, George is able to be in and out in milliseconds, however now, spoiled for choice, he isn't too sure what to get.

He knows he's been there for a while when tell-tale footsteps make their way towards his back, rounding the corner and slowing down once they're met with his presence. For a moment, he wonders if the person is going to say something, standing still in quiet anticipation, and he waits, and he waits, until a voice finally comes.

"Excuse me?"

"What?" George is turning quick on his heels, head angled towards the sound.

As far as he's aware he's never seen this guy before, and yet recognition happens to flash across his face. "Oh, hey George."

'Hey George', as if he's never heard that one before—the polite, seemingly innocent introduction coming from a stranger that's ready to be followed by

A scoff forces itself out of his throat, hysterical laughter. "Yes?"

The guy is taller than him, shoulders levelling off just where George's head starts, and yet when he speaks it's with such timidity that George can only imagine himself to take up half the room. In this situation, odd as it may be, he's larger than life—clearly terrifying, as evidenced by a trembling expression, but large.

"I'm sorry if this is weird," the guy starts, hands up, head down, and he's politer than most but George already knows where this is going. "But I just wanted to ask—"

George cuts him off before he can get any further

"No."

"No?"

"No," George repeats, slowly. "We are not dating?"

The guy has the audacity to act confused. "Huh?"

People like this are the worst, George has learned. They surprise him on the days where he's feeling generous, rip his clarity from his hands to replace it with their own self-interest. And in George's opinion, those who act as though they're entitled to information and then flinch at the possibility of it being denied, are far worse than the ones that come up to him in coffee shops and state their case as though it's law.

So the frown that overtakes his features is low, red lipped and curved enough to resemble a snarl. "Dream and I are not a thing and we never will be, I hate that prick."

Still, the guy gives him a puzzled look.

*Does George really have to say more?*

"It's just a rumour, whatever people think they saw wasn't true," he snaps. "It's pathetic how so many of you feed off of other people's lives, like can you not get a hobby? Or friends of your own? Because I'm really getting sick and tired of having to talk to people like you when I'd much rather be in my dorm not having to worry about it." He takes a breath, leaning back and crossing his arms. "Is that it then? Can you leave now?"

A hand comes up to rub the back of the guy's neck.



“No sorry, I just wanted to know if you were going to buy the last bag of gummy bears,” he says, forcing a smile. “They’re the only thing I like so I wanted to get them before anyone else could.”

George is an asshole.

“Oh,” he says, stepping to the side. “No, they’re all yours. Go ahead.”

Pink dusts itself over his nose, on the heights of his cheeks and coming down to land over his neck. If there’s anything worse than gossip, it’s this. His overemotional, irrational responses to completely normal questions from completely normal guys that just want *gummy bears*.

This is ruining him.

“Thanks.”

Under the light of humiliation, George half recognises his face. A similar nose, similar eyes, he probably lives right next door, a neighbour to the likes of George and his stupid, high-school drama.

An apology is probably in order.

“Sorry,” he mumbles, fog clawing up his throat. “I probably should’ve heard you out before I started speaking. Just have a lot going on.”

“It’s okay,” the guy says carefully. The way his eyes flick to the door is obvious, an escape route being plotted within hasty seconds. “I’m going to go now.”

“What about the gummy bears?”

“I’ll find another machine.”

---

The next time he sees Dream, George has lost his cool, to say the least.

Two days, that’s how long it takes for Dream to respond. He leaves George on delivered during day, during night, and then responds with a simple ‘k’ once the time is up.

To say he isn’t angry would be a lie, but during that time George allowed himself some self reflection.

One day to think, another to stew, and the third to let it all turn back to rage.

He’s been humiliated, tortured, and put through hell ever since Dream waltzed his way into his life. And George can’t do it anymore. Either he gets a good story, the full story, because whatever bullshit he was fed last time clearly wasn’t it, or he deletes the others’ contact from his phone and goes on with the rest of his ordinary life.

The only thing he’ll miss will be the sex—the rest he can live without.

So at ten p.m., when Karl goes out on a date and George is pretending he’s caught a cold so he isn’t invited along, the cool back of a phone screen is pressed against the palm of his hand, lighting up every once in a while with idle notifications and meaningless text.

Dream's contact is blank. George has only really noticed it because he's been hovering his thumb over the picture for so long. It's his name on there (George wouldn't be able to remember any elaborate disguise) but the picture is simply the greyed out filler that he never cared enough to change. Boring. Plain. And certainly not Dream.

For someone who's so desperate to find answers, George takes more time typing out a message than he should.

He can't just say what he needs to, it wouldn't work—all that would happen is he'd be left on delivered for another week and be forced to endure more of his mind's self-destruction. When he already dislikes Dream as much as he does, the thought of having to plan out more ways to corner him and finally have the conversation they need to have, is more unappealing than this.

Besides, the only time Dream responds to him is when sex is thrown into the mix.

***George:*** *Karl's out, come over*

It only takes a few seconds for a response to pop up.

***Dream:*** *What do I get if I do?*

To be frank, George isn't in the mood for this. His reply only proves that fact.

***George:*** *The next time I blow you I won't bite your dick off, how about that?*

Each button press is intentional, sharp, rude, and simply muscle memory at this point.

***Dream:*** *Sounds good to me. Which room is it again?*

***George:*** *You know the room.*

---

Dream is dragged in by the collar of his shirt before he even has the chance to knock.

It's too dangerous for him to be seen by anyone else, so George makes sure to hide behind the frame of his door and bring his fingers up in silencing motions to his lips, so the other knows to do it all without question. And this time, George doesn't even let him get settled, he drags him in, pushes him back and then lets all hell break loose.

“What the fuck is going on?”

His voice is loud. His thoughts are louder though. Shoving, pushing, Dream is going back with his hands up in the air like a sign of surrender, the strands of dirty blond hair that were never properly in place falling down on his forehead to mess up his appearance.

Somehow, he looks shocked, as though he wasn't expecting for this to happen (certainly not again), and when the confusion never clears up, George realises that he has to clarify.

“Everyone still thinks we're dating.”

Dream's face drops. “Okay?”

“You said it would go away.”

“Oh my god, it takes time,” he groans, rolling his eyes like George is being unreasonable. “Give it another week before you start complaining. Now, is that it?”

The ends of his words are rushed, blurring together ever so slightly when he forces them out. Something about it doesn't sit right.

“Is that it?” George asks carefully. He moves forward, tilting his head.

“Yeah,” Dream nods, simply confirming that that's what he said. “Is that all you wanted?”

And that's what makes George's head spin.

Dream doesn't say things like that—he doesn't tread on tiptoes through the quieter times, or ask George if there's more to talk about.

Dream just does.

He kisses George's neck and bites down to make skin break all because he knows he gets off on the pain. He starts things and checks in later because he's confident in what he does, and it always works, there's nothing to fault—unless George starts digging at personality and all the things he's not allowed to touch. So now, when Dream hesitates and falters and questions why he's even here, George can only be suspicious.

“You're keeping something from me.”

“What?” Dream scoffs. If George didn't know any better then he'd say he's nervous. “No I'm not.”

“Yes, you are,” he presses, stepping closer, closer until the backs of Dream's knees hit the desk, closer until they're standing pressed against one another. “What is it?”

“It's nothing,” Dream tries, but it doesn't work, George can see right through him.

He doesn't need to say anything else for Dream to break. A football player, the popular guy, cowering under George's touch like this is more frightful than fear itself.

One, two. The words fall like rose petals wilted to the floor, right from Dream's parted lips.

“I might have told people that we're dating.”

And *oh*, George was not expecting that.

“What?” He questions, expression scrunched into pure confusion because what the fuck? His own mind has to have made that up, there's no chance that that can be true.

“It was an accident.”

“How can that be an accident?”

“It just slipped out,” Dream tries to say, being cut off by two hands coming down to push against his chest.

That excuse is pathetic, weak. Because how does one lie to the faces of everyone he's ever known and try to act as though it's as trivial as stealing sweets from the corner shop when they were four. Dream *knows* how George felt about this, he knows how much he values privacy, and yet he's still

here saying that telling everyone they were dating isn't the end of the world.

"That's fucking cheap."

"I didn't mean to," Dream exclaims. His eyes fall to the floor, arms pushing George back so they aren't just face to face. "I wanted to impress my ex."

He's bitter and it's showing. In the bite of his tone, the curve to his posture, Dream shows more emotion than George has ever seen him with, souring his expression as soon as the word 'ex' can shrivel his lips. Now George really does need to know, because not only is his name in here and he's been lied to about it for as long as life, there are more people involved, more people that likely hate his guts despite not even knowing him.

Dream is the cause of all of this.

Perhaps that only just clicks, perhaps up until then, George was only really moving on autopilot as a response to every word. But now it's clear and it's clicking, and the fact that Dream of all people, the one that's meant to know it's a secret, the one that's meant to care about his reputation far more than George does, had the gall to tell people they're more than they actually are, is shocking.

George barely even knows what to say.

"How does your ex have anything to do with this?"

"I was at a party, okay?"

George simply gives him a look as if to say 'go on.'

"At first it was a dumb rumour, because someone really did see you with my letterman," Dream starts, speaking so quickly that the other has to strain to pick up on the words. "But apparently word got around fast and someone was talking about us when we were all sitting around so obviously everyone heard."

A pause. A shrug. George can't understand where he's going.

"My ex though," Dream continues. "She was the only one that refused to believe it. According to her, I'm not good at relationships, so no sane person would actually stay with me, so I just blurted out that it was." Dream half looks embarrassed. George doesn't have to force himself to think that he should be. "Which was a dumb idea I know, because who in their right mind would believe that I'd ever date *you*?"

"Everybody apparently," George drones.

"Shut up."

He thought he'd be more angry, when he finally found out the true cause for each whisper of their names in hidden hallways, but no. Strangely, George can't dig the feeling out from alongside the others.

There's a reason he can't stand Dream. The fact that he doesn't care for anybody other than himself is certainly one of them. But for the most incomprehensible of reasons, George can almost understand where he's coming from—why he said what he said, why making sure no one in that room saw him as alone was more important than keeping a 'fuck buddies' affair a secret.

With all that in mind, George still despises him for it.

"I'm so mad at you," he huffs, hands on his head when he steps back and tries to breathe. "This was meant to be private."

"I know that, I'm not fucking dumb."

Ultimately, Dream is back to his bite, the unlikeable qualities that make him so much harder to tolerate swinging back in full force as soon as he's not coddled by welcoming hands.

"You could've fooled me."

It's Dream's fault they're in this mess. His loud mouth getting them into bother and causing George hell. (Adding onto the list of reasons why George never goes to parties is the fact Dream is dumb. And by that, George means that everyone else who was in that room is also dumb for believing him and his web of lies.)

It's scary how quickly these things can spin despite how profusely they're denied. Just thinking about it makes him tense, but the more he thinks, the angrier he gets, up until that anger is put out by lukewarm water.

It's out now, everyone that was at that party knows some twisted version of the truth. There's no use in getting angry about the things that have already happened, but it just had to happen at a party that George didn't go to, where there was no defending himself or slapping a hand red on top of Dream's lips to muffle his voice. Now, he's been thrown to the sharks, circled by fins and fangs and the eyes of every single student.

*Fuck*, George never really processed just how many people Dream will have told.

"How many people know?"

"I don't know," Dream shrugs, pulling on the strings of his own hoodie. George shoots him a look. "A lot."

This emotion is new. Similar to guilt but not quite as strong—Dream's own equivalent.

"I'm sorry," he says, like it fixes anything. "I know you don't believe me but I actually am. It's just my ex looked so angry when I said I had someone."

Brunette, tall, super pretty, George can only imagine anger on the face he'd seen before.

"Bella, right?" He asks, when curiosity gets the best of him.

Say he was just the second row of confirmation for her asks, did he prove Dreams' statement or disappear too quickly for her to gauge if it was the truth?

Good lasting impressions are rarely ever made from interrupting a stranger at god knows when in the morning and quizzing them about ex boyfriends and current affairs. George can't help but hold her memory at arm's length.

"Yeah, how did you—"

"I might have met her a few days ago," George mentions. "Didn't like her."

For a brief second, Dream smiles.

"I don't either," he admits, shrugging and shaking his head. "But I wanted to shove it in her face so badly, and Karl looked so happy when I said we were a thing so I didn't want to have to tell him it

wasn't true."

Against his own will, George reacts visibly to the words. "Karl?"

"Yeah." A nod, voice levelled to a point only suitable for this. Humility. Embarrassment. Confidence that's trying to force through it all, Dream never forgets to make eye contact—he forces George to listen. "I forgot to mention he was there too."

And now it makes sense why Karl was so adamant about knowing more than the other, because to his knowledge George really was lying. It's not as though Dream would have a reason to, in place.

It's tense, in this room, this building. They stand on top of carpeted floors and under the scrutiny of the overhead light, and on the most normal of days, they would be sitting in disarray right now, unclothed, under the sheets and feeling for more, either in whimpered sounds or touches that only get harder. But after the events of this week, George doesn't know if he has it in him to even fake it, and now, looking at Dream, he isn't sure if the other can as well.

The expression on the other's face is almost enough to make George huff. Dream almost looks sad, like he's the victim in all of this, and even if it sends sympathy shooting in sparks down his spine, it's still not enough for forgiveness. A little bit of honesty could have saved them a whole lot.

"Who wasn't there?" George jokes, lightening the tone despite himself.

He doesn't want a serious answer, what he wants is for the other to respond with a jab, twisted, hurtful words that serve to rationalise sick feelings. And yet Dream gives him one.

"You."

He forces out a laugh, casting his eyes to the floor because it feels far better than confrontation. "So everyone thinks we're dating?"

A hum. "Pretty much."

When anger simmers, it turns to acceptance—a feeling that George hasn't allowed himself to properly hold. It's not as bad as he first thought, and certainly not as good as he'd have hoped, but it's that out of control sentiment that can dictate his days while making things a thousand times worse.

There's nothing they can do without letting the rumour run its course. With any luck people will be locking their lips shut and wiping their minds by the next month. Until then, he can curse Dream and his affliction for the things that destroy later.

Their eyes meet once again. That loathing comes back in full force.

"I can tell them I lied," Dream starts. An option that George had only briefly considered. "That we aren't actually together."

To a degree, the sentence seems strained—laboured in some unintelligible way. And the flicker of red that comes across Dream's nose and makes itself sparse across his face, is foreign, enough so that when he speaks, George nearly forgets to listen.

"It's just, I didn't want Bella to see me still single after all this time," he sighs, so quiet that the other could mistake it for a mumble. "It's pathetic."

George tilts his head. "Pathetic?"

“Yeah, it’s like, am I that awful to be around? I don’t want her to be right when she said nobody actually wants to date me.”

One of George’s greatest weaknesses, it seems, is his humanity.

Dream’s fucking disgusting, sure, but at the end of the day he’s still human, and George for some unclear reason, feels *bad*.

He shouldn’t. Not when Dream has enough things going for him that not having a boyfriend isn’t the end of the world, but *fuck* when he looks around with downturned eyes and lips that are pressed together in memory, George can’t help but feel his heartstrings tug.

Briefly, he contemplates leaning forward to place a hand on the other’s back, but he can feel the press of cool skin of crinkled fabric ghosting over his palm to make him cringe before he even has the chance. He’s never been good at comfort, or solace or anything of the sort, so he forces his arms to stay by his sides.

This is the person whose name has been giving him hell for the last week. Dream isn’t deserving of his sympathy.

Meagre silence takes over for just a second, all-consuming and as suffocating as it gets. Resentment can only bubble under the skin, evident in George’s short breaths and pointed away stance, and yet when Dream glances to him he almost wants to relent.

He looks like death tonight.

Covered in sweat, spit, or the strings of fabric as they’re pulled from a beating chest, he looks far better.

From across the room, George can hear his phone ding.

He doesn’t think too much before going to check it, leaving the other as he picks it up and opens the notification.

***Karl:*** *Party Saturday night, you in?*

And then George is struck by one of the worst ideas he’s ever had.

Everyone already knows, there’s no denying that. They think that Dream and George, while they lie between each other’s spread legs and never kiss because the touch would be too far, hold hands and share smiles when they come down from their highs alongside it. They believe that hatred isn’t an option any longer for these two.

When the captain of the football team comes calling the only logical thing to do would be to allow him in with open arms. While George finds that notion both stupid and impossible seeing as the man in question is the most annoying thing in existence, others clearly don’t. And so to say this will be something they can get over, is both ignorant and downright wrong.

Karl believes it. Sapnap believes it. *Dream’s ex* believes it.

And George can only think of what would happen if they allowed them to continue.

Sure, this past week has been awful, but that’s only because George was unprepared. If he knew what was going on then he’d be able to farm it for his use—get certain people to leave him alone on the streets, or stop others from inviting him places and then looking down their noses when he

says he has work to complete.

A boyfriend—a popular, fake boyfriend, might just do some good.

It would certainly get Karl off his case, at the very least.

Even if said boyfriend is Dream, his greatest enemy, his least favourite ‘friend’, it might do some good for his reputation (as awful as that is to admit).

All this time, George has been fretting over the meaningless, double checking glances in each class and barking at those who say more than they need, but now that he stops, reads over the message Karl sent once, then twice, then a third time so it’s printed into his memory, he lets himself reconsider.

Pretending to date Dream.

A win for both sides, perhaps.

Contemplation burns as it wracks through George’s frame, causing his posture to grow worse and lips to be bitten. He’s yet to say a word, simply standing and wondering, and by the wall, Dream does the same, quiet in his observations.

All of the studying in the world could never have prepared him for this.

“I’ll come clean,” Dream says. Malachite eyes pierce through George’s skin. “I shouldn’t have said it in the first place.”

This is a bad idea.

He knows it, it’s fucking dumb and will only work if they both get over the fact that they can’t stand each other long enough to speak outside of situations where it matters. Because this, *this* is the nicest they’re ever going to be, when they’re dumb and desperate and trying to live up to expectations that they’ve only set up for himself.

There’s no way he’ll even agree. It’s probably best not to ask.

Still, George is speaking before he can stop himself.

“Wait,” he mutters, breathing heavy and hard and squeezing his eyes shut for just a second.  
“Dream.”

There’s a pause before the other responds. “Yeah?”

Now or never.

“What if we didn’t,” and he hesitates, allows his thoughts to simmer. “...tell them.”

Silence is inevitable.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, everyone already thinks it now,” George admits. It’s a harsh fact but it’s true, there’s no way they can change everyone’s opinions overnight. “And I don’t want Karl to think I’m actually a loser that doesn’t know anyone other than him.”

“I’m not sure I’m following.” Dream breathes, he cocks his head to one side, and most importantly



he fakes a smile. “What are you talking about?”

The words are coming so close to being uttered into the stale air. Either here, George will say it and be shot down, ridiculed and told that such a proposal is the most ludicrous thing he could have ever come up with, or he’ll forever keep his silence, letting his days be ruined by nagging questions and those who’ll never realise he needs space alone.

His words come out stumbled, half scared, maybe nervous, and George doesn’t get like this—he’s never nervous and yet he is. Just another reason why Dream’s presence will never truly be welcome.

“What if we didn’t tell anyone that we’re not together?”

Confusion takes over angled features. “Like we…”

“Pretended to date,” George finishes. “Yeah.”

It’d be a lie to say he isn’t holding his breath, carefully awaiting the next response like this is the difference between life and death. And to some extent it is—mortification will surely take over when Dream tells his friends about such pitiful events, from then on, George may as well have passed.

He can feel eyes burning holes into the side of his face, looking to the side to try and minimise the effect.

And then, the unexpected happens.

“You’d want to do that?” Dream doesn’t laugh, he just stares. “Like, for me?”

“Not just for you,” George bites, because *god* no, he might feel bad but not that bad. “But, what’s the harm?”

“I don’t like you,” Dream says. “And you don’t like me.”

Truth lies stagnant in the simplest of words.

Hatred is an odd feeling, so hushed yet so apparent. When venom wraps itself around his lips, suffocates the better feelings to replace them with its poisoned bite, George never wishes for that feeling to be stronger. Instead, he lets himself become familiar with the dull ache of dislike and loathes Dream from the sheets of his bed, letting out the sharpest of quips like it’s enough to show his feelings.

Rationalising those feelings was far easier than it should have been.

When Dream fucks him, he leans back, never gets close enough to share breaths or pants or anything that’ll prove he’s human. When they spot each other on campus they glance away like just a look can hurt, and when they see each other closely they dig at all the flaws in existence. Simple annoyance coming from the way Dream’s blood rushes through his veins to how rude he is when anyone other than popularity incarnate tries to speak to him out of turn.

For lack of better phrasing, it’s a rush.

Dream is a dick and George doesn’t think he wants that to change.

“Well it won’t be for long,” he says, to help both his mind and the other’s. “Just until your ex stops

being a bitch and Karl leaves me alone for a bit.”

“Do you really think it could work?”

“I think so,” George shrugs, although now Dream says it, he has to question. “We don’t have to, though, if you don’t want.”

“No.” Dream shakes his head. “I want to.” He cringes at the way it sounds, doubling back as soon as he can. “Don’t get me wrong, I still think you’re awful, and I wouldn’t be anywhere near you if you didn’t know what you were doing in bed. But we’re here now, aren’t we? It’ll just be the same, except a bit more public.”

It doesn’t hurt because it’s honest, simple as.

George raises an eyebrow. “More public?”

“Well yeah,” Dream explains. “If you’re my boyfriend then we’ll have to actually do stuff together. Holding hands and dates and all that.”

*Shit*, George didn’t think about that side of things.

“And you’ll have to come to all my games, and talk to everyone that’s jealous of how someone like you got with me. The usual, you know?”

Mischief is twisted between the words, a sharp tongue coming out to wet a pink lower lip once Dream realises George’s unimpressed state.

“Not a chance,” he deadpans.

“You’ve agreed to it now,” Dream chuckles, dark. “No going back.”

“I’m doing this for Karl,” George mutters, to himself. “For Karl.”

Dream’s voice near catches him by surprise.

“Why does Karl even care what you do?”

There’s a long answer, and a short one. George can only care to admit the latter.

“He thinks I’m *lonely*.” The last letters are dragged out, mocked and chewed up before being spat to the side. “Which isn’t true, but it means no matter how many times I say I don’t want to do something, he’s still trying to drag me everywhere. I just want space to breathe.”

Different lifestyles are favoured by different types of man. Isolation is George’s and he should be free to live it as he wishes.

He can see the way Dream stares at him—with judgement in jade irises, and he’s reminded of why he stays alone. It’s far easier than fake interaction.

They can barely stand to look at each other, why would this be a good idea?

Dream shrugs, not confident or cocky, but still just as despicable. “So dating, huh?”

“Yeah, once we break up I’ll be so distraught I won’t be able to leave my room for anything other than class,” George mocks, a hand coming up to gesture blankly in the air. “Karl’s going to be too busy buying me ice cream to try and get me to go out.”

“And Bella’s going to see how much of a catch I am and take back everything bad she’s ever said about me.”

*That* George doubts, but he doesn’t say anything, for both his and Dream’s sake.

“Sure.”

His answer may be short, but in his head, the conversation is anything but.

There are rules to these types of things. Rules to being friends with benefits, rules to being fuck buddies, and certainly rules to this. It’s not real, or intimate, or anything of the sort, and thinking they can go about it without guidance would be naïve.

“Okay,” Dream mumbles, like he’s processing the world around him as it happens.

George knows he has to speak.

“But we’re laying some ground rules,” he starts, no question in his tone.

As though he was thinking the same thing, Dream smiles. “Go for it.”

There’s no easy way to put it. At the end of the day this is fake—a mutual agreement made by two people that don’t like each other to get themselves a little further in life, and with that comes a new set of orders. More than fuck buddies, less than friends with benefits, and ultimately, far more complicated.

“This lasts until you’ve proved your ex wrong and then we break up,” George starts. That should go without saying, but there’s no harm in making sure it’s known. “I don’t care how, but I don’t want to be doing this for longer than necessary.”

“Done.”

George nods. “And if Karl asks, then we’re going to parties every other night, and I’m making *friends*.”

“That’ll be hard to believe.” The scowl that George sends him burns like ice. “Fine, whatever, done.”

“Also no cute couple stuff. I’m not going on fake dates or posting about you anywhere, and we don’t do anniversary shit.”

“We need to do that for people to believe it, idiot.”

“No.”

If they continue like this then it’ll be over before it even starts, going up a blaze without glory, stuttering reds and fires then freezing over to make sharp icicles drop down on their bodies like blades. Thankfully, George isn’t doing this for Dream though—he’s doing it to help himself.

The other’s input almost takes him by surprise.

“And still no kissing,” Dream states, firm. “I don’t want to do any actual relationship stuff with you.”

“I’d rather make out with a fish,” George scowls.

Kissing is off the table.

That's a rule of intimacy that George will never break. Even when Dream is between his legs and their limbs are tangled, flushed and pressed together, pink lips always face the side, not to be touched, never to be felt.

Because kissing marks something real, something that's not fuelled by pure physicality and instead lights a spark that means more. Cockiness, people that get everything they want, the guys that talk more than they're worth, aren't deserving of George's kisses.

Just the thought causes him to frown.

“So are we actually doing this?” Dream asks, breaking silence to touch George's arm.

He's a fuckboy, playing him like a fiddle because he knows it'll work. And George isn't weak, he never has been, but things like this make him question his own sanity. If every word he's being told is one big joke that'll be hung over his head later.

So he needs to hear Dream say it—have the confirmation that this is real and not his worst nightmare being twisted up and sprinkled like stardust above his eyes.

“What?”

“Dating?”

Nonchalance is what gets him through it.

“I guess we are,” he shrugs, lazily moving his shoulders, and if his voice gets quieter, his tone gets a bit more stubborn, then he hopes that no one notices. “Fake, right?”

“Obviously,” Dream spits, curling his lips down like anything else is too disgusting to even think about. “We both know I can't stand you.”

“I can't stand you either.”

“Just until my ex is off my back,” he says.

A nod. “And until Karl is off mine.”

A month tops, that's how long George gives it.

He only has to hold hands and pretend to tolerate the other for 30 days. They'll keep it discreet, only really telling the people they need to know and during that time, Karl will come to the realisation that having a boyfriend and a social life isn't for everyone, and that George is just as miserable as he was before the whole thing started.

A month until it's all over.

Until a big, dramatic “break-up” they will land George right back on his bed with his books and his blankets and no one trying to force him out of the room—right where he wants to be.

This is do-able.

Umber eyes peek out from behind their lids to glance at the other, scanning over angled features and the light that casts itself over a pointed cupid's bow. Even if Dream is a dick, George can't deny that he's the least bit attracted to him. (They wouldn't be in this situation if he wasn't.)

Then, in true Dream fashion, he strikes the question that reminds George just how shallow he really is. “And we can still have sex?”

“Now?” George frowns. “I kind of have some work to do.”

“You can do it later,” Dream says, definitive, like it isn’t even a debate. Two hands come forwards, ready to grip at George’s waist and guide him by his hips until they meet. “Right now I really want to give you a thank you for not making me tell everyone I lied.”

The switch between serious and lustful is instantaneous.

George can’t help a smile from teasing reddened lips when he’s dragged closer, moved around so that Dream can stand still against the desk while the other is susceptible to the onslaught of charm that’s sure to follow.

Dream is a dick. He’s rude, obnoxious, and treats people like shit when they don’t do exactly as asked, and George may not be a saint but at least he’s honest. When someone gets on his nerves he tells them, doesn’t pamper them with sickened lies or grin and bear it to their faces just to talk shit as soon as they’re out of the room.

No, that job goes to the people like Dream, the ones who never really grew out of popularity, or had to endure those whispers during any other stage of life.

Perhaps that’s the thing that gives him confidence. The thing that strikes the realisation that they can really do this. Because they weren’t friends in the beginning and they certainly aren’t now. He’s sure Dream would say the same. The only reason this will work is because there are no stakes—nothing to mess up, nothing to be worried about. If it works, it works, if it doesn’t, it doesn’t. Besides, no one’s going to find out the truth?

Two hands come up to loop behind Dream’s neck. “What kind of thank you?”

“When was the last time you had control for the night?”

“Control?”

“*Full* control,” Dream reiterates, looking down through darkened irises at the other. “Whatever you want.”

George raises an eyebrow. “Even the handcuffs?”

And that’s how he knows that Dream is thankful, the little nod he gets in return even though it’s a sure fact that Dream hates not being able to touch and move however he wants. George could probably get away with doing anything he’s ever wished for at this moment because this is a favour that he’s doing. Maybe for his own benefit as well but ultimately Dream needs to keep up the charade far more than he does.

So he lets himself be a little cocky.

“Bed,” George orders. “Now.”

comments and kudos are so so appreciated and really make my day :]

[my twitter](#), i post updates and all that over here so come check it out  
[playlist for this fic](#)

also i want to start linking fics that i like and recs in my notes so if you guys want more stuff to read i can share a few of my favs:

this one's by me, best friends brother au, dnf and probably my favourite thing i've written [link here](#)

this i can't recommend enough, practice kissing, by one of my favourite writers, and just downright amazing [link here](#)

hope u guys enjoyed the chapter!

## Chapter 3

### Chapter Summary

“What?” He turns to see Dream lean against the wall, looking up, over Karl with a smug, cutting smile that signals far too much danger than it’s worth. “Am I not allowed to visit my boyfriend in his own dorm?”

Karl looks scandalised. “Boyfriend?”

### Chapter Notes

Thank u sm to [ro](#) for beta-ing this chapter!  
Hope u guys enjoy !! :]

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It is early morning when George’s patience is next put to the test.

The light is blinding, breaking into the room in narrow strips from where Karl has pulled the blinds down, and if it weren’t for the fact that he had snuck in so late into the night, then George might have had some less than pleasant words to say about the whole ordeal. But as it stands, he’s far too sluggish to voice his complaints, the only noise he’s capable of making, coming out as a slurred, quiet, grumble.

“Get up,” Karl groans, pacing back and forth across the length of their dorm.

He has his phone in his hands, his wallet in his pocket, and the slightest of glares on his face as he stares at where George lies stagnant on his bed, wrapped up under the sheets and too drowsy to even function.

They never get up this early. Not when they don’t have class or anything of the utmost importance to do, and so George thinks he’s perfectly justified in not wanting to properly move right away—especially not when he knows where they’re planning to go.

“Sapnap’s going to be here soon,” Karl stresses, looking down at his screen to find the time. “He can’t give us a ride if you’re still in bed.”

“Go without me.”

There's an unamused stare. “No. The last time I went grocery shopping without you, you complained for a whole hour about not having enough of the snacks you liked as soon as I was back.”

It’s true. But only because Karl decided that buying off-brand, healthy, protein bars was the right move to make. Honestly, George was being courteous by not making him go back out and buy something else that very second. (He lived off of the vending machine for a whole week, ate every

pack of Cheetos that they had in stock.)

“Get up,” Karl reiterates, blankly staring in the hopes that the other will finally do as asked.

But George just shoves his head into his pillow, eager to catch up on a few more minutes of needed rest. Peace, quiet. Then Karl’s voice ringing sharp through it all.

“*George.*”

It’s so easy to ignore, to pretend it isn’t even there. George does such a good job of blanking out the numerous calls of his name; he finds it easier to close his eyes and hope that sleep is strong enough to drag him under, than to truly listen.

It isn’t though, because of course it isn’t, and instead of being lulled to sleep by calming waves and heavy, warm sheets, George is instead faced with his sheets being ripped away from his body—a taunting glare being thrown at him when Karl dumps them on the floor.

“What the fuck?” He grumbles, doing so well to keep his tone level despite the situation ahead.

And there was a possibility that it was an accident, but with the way Karl is staring straight at him, gleeful and practically beaming at his own intuition, George wouldn’t be dumb enough to mistake it for one.

“Get up.”

Unfortunately, there's nowhere left to run. “Fine,” he says, lifting his heavy head and doing his best to sit up.

Gravity acts against him. Each movement is agony.

“Do you have jeans I can borrow?” He asks, rubbing his eyes with the back of his hands.

Practically everything George owns is in the wash, (other than a few secrets which haven't been touched in God knows how long) and quite frankly, he doesn’t want to be wearing the shorts that he slept in while in the public eye.

Wide, umber eyes look up in pleading fashion. It seems however, that Karl is not susceptible to his charm.

“No, wear sweats,” he bites, snapping his fingers to tell George to stand. “And put on some deodorant, you smell awful.”

“Shut up.”

“It’s true.”

With a scowl on his face, George forces himself up, rummaging through his clothes to find the only clean pair of sweats that he owns, and shedding his shorts while Karl does his best to look away. It’s a single spritz of deodorant, a large hoodie being dragged over his head to hug his frame and drown out all distinguishable features.

And to anyone that spots them, it’ll be so obvious that he’s out of their room against his will, with dark bags under his eyes and a slump to his posture, but he’s out and that’s what matters.

They can finally get snacks and stock up their minifridge for another few weeks.



They hang around for around ten more minutes before there's a knock on the door, the rapping of knuckles banging against the wood in a rhythm that makes the two of them jump.

"Who is it?" George says aloud, not wanting to open it himself.

Next to him, Karl shakes his head. "Sapnap, idiot," he mutters, one last glance to the side before he goes to answer. "Fix your hair."

Instinctively, a hand goes up to pat down chocolate locks, tawny brown hair sticking up in a fashion that surely isn't flattering.

The sound of the door clicking open is rough as it scratches against his eardrums, a click and a pull and—

George can hear Karl's eyebrows raise. "You're not Sapnap."

A laugh. "I'm not."

And just like that, George freezes.

A second to breathe, another to fret, and a third to linger on how they *definitely* did not talk about this.

His eyes squeeze shut as he tries to piece his kind together. "What are you doing here?" he still asks, unable to keep the bite out of his tone.

He doesn't even need to look at the door to know who it is, doesn't need the memories to come flooding back just yet.

Perhaps, for a moment, he can pretend he doesn't remember their deal, live in ignorance and continue to hate each hair that lies on a dirty blond head. And yet he can't. They've set their terms, this is the first time that they'll ever have to put 'fake dating to piss certain people off and impress a few others' to the test.

"What?" He turns to see Dream lean against the wall, looking up, over Karl with a smug, cutting smile that signals far too much danger than it's worth. "Am I not allowed to visit my boyfriend in his own dorm?"

Karl looks scandalised. "Boyfriend?"

And leaning against his desk, George can feel his breathing stop.

It feels so wrong to hear the words fall from between Dream's lips, so alarming to feel their eyes meet and only be able to stare as his gut twists tight and dread fills the pit of his stomach.

He's doing this to spite him. To watch George's mind stutter as he's forced into second gear and has to hide his shock behind steadily widening eyes. *What the fuck is Dream playing at? They should have at least had a conversation before he just barged into his dorm at God knows when in the morning.*

"Oh, did George not tell you?" Dream asks. There's a glimmer of mischief in aventurine eyes, only directed towards the former as he steps past Karl to walk up to him, smug, arrogant, and pushing his hand forward to take George's in his own. "We're dating."

Understandably, George wants to kill him.

“Dating might be strong,” he debates, ripping his palm from the other’s grasp. He knows what they agreed to, but there’s no need to say it so crudely, not in front of Karl, who at the moment doesn’t look as happy as George had expected. “‘Seeing each other’ is more accurate.”

Silence.

“Oh,” Karl says, blank. Hands come up, they beckon him over. “George, a word please?”

He doesn’t even have a chance to say yes before Karl is grabbing his forearm and dragging him out of the room, into the empty hallway outside.

The touch is harsh, painted fingernails practically digging into his skin as Karl slams the door shut and traps Dream behind it, turning to George with something unfamiliar in his eyes.

It’s an unseen expression, lips neither tugged up nor down and simply settling in a pursed line while he takes a deep breath and lets it simmer. Quiet, different, just thinking.

For just a moment, George wonders if this wasn’t as good of an idea as he had originally thought.

He watches Karl close his eyes, raised eyebrows and a look that tries to burn through a wooden frame.

“You’re dating?” He asks slowly.

George nods, the motion stiff even by his own accord.

*Him and Dream*, why would Karl be happy about that?

Breathing deep, Karl only steps back. “Like actually?”

This time his eyes are open, searching for something the other cannot see.

That alone is enough to make George tense, because it’s not common that Karl is unreadable—more often than not the other is far too open for his own good. Which means that now, when George nods again and narrowed eyes widen ever so slightly, pretending to date Dream starts to feel like the dumbest decision he’s ever made in his life.

“How long?”

*Of course Karl sees right through them. Of course he’s scrutinising every step.*

A tilt of the head, a slight struggle to come up with a lie that seems believable as he’s watched so steadily. George shrugs his shoulders and shakes his head, voice croaking ever so slightly when he says, “A few days, maybe less.”

Karl huffs, quiet.

It’s a small sound but George still stiffens at the curl of it. A breath in. A breath out.

And then, just like that, nothingness switches to glee.

To watch the switch in real time is almost overwhelming, umber eyes catching on pink corners as a splitting smile breaks over the other’s features, a hand clutched to a chest, a laugh bursting out with force like no other. It’s quiet then it’s everything, and the way George is dragged forwards, chest jerking and eyes staying wide, is enough to send him crashing off his feet just the same.

“Oh my god,” Karl practically exclaims, moving so quickly that there’s no option than to accept his hug. “I am so happy for you!”

“You are?”

“What? Of course I am.”

It’s almost unbelievable, how tightly he’s being squeezed, how heavy the other’s breathing is at the sudden news, but there’s no mistaking this for something else. Karl is *happy* for him, Karl *believes* him.

And finally he’s readable again, familiar, wearing the pearly white smile that as of late has been reserved for almost anyone other than George. So while usually this unwelcome touch would be shoved away and accompanied by the bite of George kindly informing Karl of how the other has a boyfriend for this kind of shit, for once he lets himself be hugged.

“I can’t believe it,” says disbelief in a single laugh, Karl pulling back and letting a tight grip slip from around the other’s chest.

It’s such a sweet sound, not beration or disappointment, only excitement, and just like that George can remember why he’s doing this stupid thing. Because there’s no pity in Karl’s eyes, only joy.

Pure, unadulterated joy.

“This is exactly what you needed,” he continues. “Finally, you have actual people to hang out with.”

“Thanks, Karl.”

“A boyfriend,” he continues, breathing deep and batting his hands in front of his eyes. “A real life boyfriend. I think I’m going to cry.” As if to reinforce his point, he lets out a dramatic sigh, arm colliding with the door to their side as he slinks down to rest on top of it.

In front of him, George’s stare remains blank. “Calm down.”

“How can I calm down in times like these?” Karl asks. “My boring, idiot of a roommate finally has a life, with a *boyfriend*.”

Something about the way he says the words—loud, smitten, as though Dream, the very man they’re talking about, isn’t just behind a paper thin wall—makes George redden. It’s nothing sensical, if he were to think it through a little longer then he’d understand that words are just words and these laughs are simply built off of something completely fake.

But he doesn’t. Instead he pretends that the way that Karl is staring at him, smiling despite the fact that George doesn’t remember the last time he was in a real, not at all fake, relationship, doesn’t make him want to scream. That this, after everything, was a good idea.

“Yeah,” George says through gritted teeth. “A boyfriend.”

Somehow, the label sounds contrived, coming from his own tongue. The way George forms each vowel seems forced, blackened ever so slightly as though this is his body’s own way of rejecting such a term, especially when it’s being used to describe Dream, of all people.

It’s embarrassing in a way. When it’s early morning and George’s sluggish brain hasn’t quite managed to keep up with all that’s going on, the implication of him and Dream doing more than

nothing and less than 'love' is enough for him to be washed in shame.

There is no doubt in George's mind that Karl's words have been heard all throughout their hall.

There is no doubt in his mind that Dream is laughing, like the asshole he is, at George's mortification.

He does however doubt his ability to keep his hands to himself the next time he sees his so-called boyfriend. It'll be a miracle if oil painted fingers manage to stop themselves from wrapping around a slender neck, grasping.

Dream will be lucky to leave without red printed thumbs stamped violent onto his skin.

"You are going to tell me everything," Karl demands, ripping George from murderous thoughts. "As soon as we get back I want every single detail."

"Every detail?"

A slight stammer, not enough to be obvious, but still enough to be picked up on.

"Oh my god." The grin is wiped from Karl's features almost immediately, as though something dastardly has overcome his thoughts. Those eyes, wide and curious, flick up and down George's chest with shameful implications, pink lips coming close just to whisper, "Have you guys had *sex*?"

Despite himself, George burns red.

He's never been sex-shy, no, but the thought of Karl asking in such a public manner is mortification at it's finest. What causes his shoulders to stiffen and his eyes to close, body flinching back with sudden haste.

In reality, sex is all he and Dream have ever done. It's not as though he should be being asked so early in the morning, though.

"Oh my god, you have," Karl drones, mouth dropping open with his hand coming up to cover it. "Is he good?"

*Hands. Legs. Tangled limbs and cherry bites, dirty, dirty words as hips press together and flushed skin meets something tan.*

"I think we should go to the car," George huffs, acting as though strawberry pink isn't crawling up his neck, drowning his features in its saccharine blush.

"He is," Karl lets out a gasp, shocked even though he's not, faking it because the smile he wears can't help but creep back onto his face. "You have to tell me later."

He opens the door.

Dream, as awful as always, is still leaning behind the frame. "What are we talking about later?"

"Nothing," George scowls.

He'd almost managed to forget just how much he hates Dream's pretty face.

"Why are you frowning, sweetie?" Condescending, Dream steps forwards as though invading George's personal space is his top priority, like Karl guiding the two of them out of the room isn't even a bother. He tries to take his hand within his own, threading slender fingers between their

statuesque pair, but George pulls away before they can really stay together, scowling and doing his best to shove Dream to the side.

“I hate you,” he mutters. Because this isn’t going to become his normal, no matter how close they can appear to be, it won’t.

“You should be thanking me,” Dream murmurs. “It seems to be working so far.”

“How many people have you told?”

“That we’re dating?”

“That it’s fake,” George scowls.

It’d be just like Dream to string him along for a few days just to try and embarrass him in front of everyone by proclaiming their situation fake once he’s done with it. And while George hopes that that won’t happen, he can’t help but see the glimmer in Dream’s eyes and think.

“No-one,” Dream answers. “Pretending to date you is the saddest thing ever, why would I want people to know that?”

“I don’t know,” George shrugs.

They’re standing too close, just Dream’s presence hovering above him is enough to make his shoulders tense.

“Then don’t ask dumb questions,” Dream concludes. The hand that tried to take George’s comes instead to rest on his shoulders, the urge to push it away being squashed when Karl turns to look at the two and just *melts*.

“You guys are so cute together,” he says, more to George than anyone else.

And for lack of a better response, George just smiles. He lets the guy he hates tug him closer and press a mocking touch against his back, allowing resentment to simmer, heavy, at the top of his stomach. And most importantly, he allows Karl, his best friend, to glance them up and down and really think they’re a thing.

Somehow, George thinks that this might actually work.

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At first, George didn’t realise how being in a public ‘relationship’ would impact his everyday life.

It starts with Karl, when he sits George down and begs for the details of how he and Dream got together, and George just has to sit there and take it, scrambling to come up with a story that seems somewhat plausible—with tears and begging and roses that are said to have been thrown at his feet.

Then it’s when he’s moving things out from under his bed and realises that he’s still got Dream’s letterman bunched up and on his floor, collecting dust as it lies untouched. He pokes it around for just a second before determining that he should probably give it back. Which is why as of now, it lies over the back of his desk chair, serving as a constant reminder of the other’s bitter presence.

But the most alarming part of it all is how despite the rumour being put to rest in George's own mind, to everybody else, it's still duty as normal. Which means that while he knows exactly where he stands with Dream, the bane of his existence, nobody else really understands the details.

In fact, they barely know a single one.

So George realises, pretty quickly, when he's talking to a guy in his computer science class about the personal parts of their lives, that he can say whatever he wants and it'll be believed.

That as it stands, Dream has no choice but to go along with his mistruths.

Because falling into a lie is easy. Shifting the narrative so he has more influence over the words that are being spoken behind his back, is something completely different.

Something that George finds is simply second nature.

"He cries after sex, y'know," he says, leaning forward to get closer to a girl he doesn't even know.

She came up to him when he was ordering coffee after class, with raised eyebrows and curiosity sparking in her steps, and usually George would have just told her to fuck off, but today he's feeling generous. That, or he's so bored that he's decided to entertain other people for once.

"Like at first I thought he was just getting some emotions out, but it's *every* time. It's kind of embarrassing."

"Really?" She asks, voice laced with confusion.

"It's true," he says, "Every single time, just... waterworks."

He hides his smile behind his cup and watches her go, smiling quietly to himself as his words echo around in his own mind. Dream wouldn't cry in front of him if George was the last man on earth—it's almost ironic if he thinks about it.

"He *begged* me to date him," he says to someone else as they're walking down a narrow hallway, towards the exit of their building. "I said no so many times, but he just kept on asking." Putting the sigh into his voice is more fun than it should be. "If I'm being honest, I felt bad."

Gullible, gullible people.

"Eats with his mouth wide open," a guy in his computer science class hears. Dream is sitting just a few seats down but he can't hear, not when George is covering his mouth with the palm of his hand and uttering the words as though they're a secret. "Absolutely no table manners. It's disgusting, really."

He sees the odd look that the guy shoots in Dream's direction and pretends not to smile, putting his head back down to finish his pseudocode before the professor asks for it to check.

"Worst orgasm face ever," he tells a cheerleader when he's walking to the bleachers one day, ready to go find Karl so they can go get smoothies together like they had planned. "Like I physically have to look away."

"It can't be that bad," she says, looking up through her eyelashes to question his words, but George just nods.

"It is," he confirms, lying through daggered teeth. "His whole body just cringes and he looks like

he's about to sneeze. Huge turn-off."

The moment she visualises it is obvious, given with how her nose scrunches up and she glances away ever so slightly.

It's slightly humorous how shallow everyone is when it comes to their adored football captain, and normally George wouldn't give the time of day to those kinds of people, but he's telling her this because he knows that she's popular—always with a group of others and always talking about other people's lives.

It'll get through campus in a day, maybe less. And quite possibly, it'll get back to Dream's ex too. In fact, Dream should thank him for what he's saying. Why would anybody doubt the truth of their 'relationship' when George knows everything there is about the other? (Even if not all of it is true.)

Not all of his stories are reputation ruining though.

"He used to practise kissing with his teddy bear," George tells a small group one afternoon. "Mr. Cuddles," he says to their shocked faces. "Yeah, I know."

But the most fun lies are the ones he gets to tell to Karl.

Karl, who now has been trying to interrogate George every single day in order to 'get in on the gossip' as he likes to put it. Karl, who believes every single word that comes from the other's lips and falls for them hook, line, and sinker.

It's not just because he thrives off of this type of petty gossip, but with Karl George is allowed to get into so much more detail, describe each gritty fact or lewd scene to eagerly open ears.

Even when they're standing in a hallway, leaning against a wall and watching people leave the building, with Sapnap pretending he isn't just as interested in the conversation to Karl's side, George can come up with something entertaining.

He'll put on his favourite frown and tug on the sleeves of his sweatshirt, putting disdain in umber eyes.

"If I'm being honest, he's not that good at sex," he says to start out, watching Karl flinch back and start to sympathise.

In all honesty, sex is something they rarely talk about. Karl isn't shy about the whole thing and neither is George, but sometimes certain things don't need to be shared, secrets are often welcome. However what it does mean, is that when they do finally talk about it, they both have a lot more to say than they should.

"What does *bad* mean exactly?"

"Like, I have to do all of the work," George lies, knowing perfectly well that half of the time he does nothing other than lie there and tell Dream to get on with it. "What else would you expect though? He can't be good at everything."

A shaking head and annoyance on his behalf, Sapnap's expression stretching out as he tries to hide his smile behind his hat.

"Does he like..." Karl looks to his boyfriend for a second, smiling weakly and tilting his head. "...*jab*?"

It takes far too much effort to stifle his laugh.

“It's like he's digging for gold,” George confirms. “Like, it's so bad but I don't know how to bring it up.”

He, of all people, should know that Dream definitely doesn't *jab* when it comes to sex—he's far more careful with it all, likes to make sure that he's hitting the right spot just to see the other's eyes turn glassy. But Karl doesn't know that. For all Karl knows, Dream lasts ten seconds and can't find a rhythm to save his own life.

“You need to tell him,” Karl advises, settling further into Sapnap's side to try and bring the other into the conversation. “Sap could sit him down and give him some advice, or we could talk to him together. I have some tips for him if he really needs 'em.”

“I don't know,” George sighs, fake on all accounts. “I should probably do it myself. ”He moves to let out another small sound, ready to carry on going until there's an unfamiliar weight on his shoulders.

Shitty cologne, a body taller than his, George doesn't even have to look to know who it is.

“Do what yourself?” Dream asks.

George has to fight the feeling to push his arm away. “Oh, nothing.”

“George was actually telling us about how bad you are in bed.”

George shoots him a glare. “*Karl.*”

But before he can get another word out, it's Dream that's turning to him, an arm around his shoulders and amusement littered pink on his features.

“Really?” He muses, lips dragging up. “I don't remember you saying that night.” It's that signature smirk that George seethes at the sight of, the one that shows off sharp canines and pink lips—mischievous in such subtle movements. “What was it again? *‘Oh, Dream more, harder, I love your—’*”

An elbow is rammed into Dream's stomach before he can get another word out.

“Shut up,” George glares, definitely not red in the face. “What do you want?”

“Nothing sweetie, just here to talk to you.” Dream still manages to tease even with the ache of George's full strength, shooting through his ribs. He turns to Karl and Sapnap like this isn't a scene to behold, like him holding George in public and mocking their sex life is just normal behaviour for the two. “We have places to be, talk to you guys later?”

With glistening eyes, Karl hums in agreement, tugging on Sapnap's hand to get him to do the same. “Later.”

Their feet are moving before George can even process it—bodies hustling towards the door at the end of the hall.

“Don't you have practice?” George asks with honed pupils.

He can feel eyes on them, can see curiosity peaking in the crowds of eyes.

“I can be late,” Dream says.



There's a grin spiking the corners of his lips, something that's only obvious through the other's peripheral. His hand settles on the small of George's back, and undoubtedly George can feel every slight press his finger's make, trying not to sink too far into it and walk so that the other has to speed to catch up.

"What do you want, Dream?"

"Can't I just hang out with my fake-boyfriend out of the kindness of my heart?"

A laugh bubbles up from the back of George's throat, forced, malicious, disbelieving.

"Fine," Dream sighs, his hand travels upwards, settling between two shoulder blades and simply staying, as though he wants people to see the pressure he applies, as though this faux possessiveness is all a part of the deal. "What's all this I'm hearing about you spreading rumours about our 'relationship'?"

This time, George has to keep down his amusement. "I don't know what you're talking about?"

"Sure you do," Dream muses. "I know I didn't tell people I don't know how to give head."

"You don't."

A scoff. "Yes, I do."

When Dream opens the door he doesn't wait to let the other get through, what he does is drop it back and almost send it swinging into George's face, the metal frame scraping against the entrance's carpet until a hand comes up to halt it.

Biting back his snapping is difficult, but people are looking. Starting a row in public isn't wise.

"Jesus," George mutters, when the sun comes to blind the front of his eyes.

There's a hum from the other side, almost like agreement. And for a moment, George wonders if this is all that's being asked of him, until Dream's voice rings out with a slight question, "Do you want to blow me?"

"What?"

"Do you want to blow me?"

Truly, George shouldn't be surprised.

They're walking towards the parking lot, undoubtedly so, and George was a fool for not realising where they were going any earlier. A fool for thinking that Dream might be putting some effort into keeping up appearances by simply taking George back to his dorm, or maybe offering to buy him coffee as a treat for getting through his classes that day.

No, he has to remember who he's with.

Dream, who only ever thinks with his dick. Who's crude and gross and in all honestly would be George's last choice to pretend to date in any other situation. To gift Dream with his presence is likely the dumbest thing that George has ever done.

Still, he allows himself to be led down a concrete path, frowning as though he could ever actually deny an opportunity to be taken apart.

“No?”

“Why not?” Dream asks, as though he was predicting the response.

“Because I have things to do later,” George lies. “You can wait until tonight.”

“But I can’t,” Dream whines, petulant. His voice dips low, coating itself with honey as he barter to get what he wants. “I’ve been thinking about it all day, it’s going to be so hard to keep down a boner when I’m with the team later.”

“That seems like your problem more than mine.”

Darkness in subtle words. “C’mon, I’ll give you something special in return too.”

“Special?” George asks. “Like what?”

“It’s a secret,” Dream grins. “You’ve got to come with me if you want to find out.”

In all honesty, George is sure to never put up much of a fight when Dream is speaking to him in that tone. Still, he does his best to keep his dignity, huffing out a small, “Fine,” and shoving straight into the other.

And that’s how George finds himself being dragged towards the parking lot in the middle of the day, his distaste for the other managing to go unspoken for just one more moment as lust takes over once more.

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Sitting on his knees in the back of Dream’s truck is not a dignifying experience.

Not when there are clothes littered across the floor, a box with bits and pieces of gym equipment, and a slight smell that surely can’t be caused by anything alive just by his side. But even with its disadvantages, George finds himself in that position far more often than he’d like to admit: in a van, on his knees, pretending that this isn’t as gross a situation as it really is,

But until he has a car of his own, this will have to do, as Dream more than constantly says.

To be frank, the only good thing about it is the privacy.

Apparently, a friend of a friend had a brother in a band, and that brother moved on to bigger and better things, so he no longer needed this piece of junk to move around their kits, and subsequently it was passed down to Dream.

Dream who sits with his head banging against the walls, pants unbuttoned so he can pull his cock out and press the head to George’s lips, fisting his hands in his hair to push him down and fuck up into his throat. Quick. One, remember to breathe. Fast. Two, try not to choke.

These hands are blushed red and gripping still-clothed thighs. They squeeze as George’s hair is pushed back, demanding tan fingers tugging on tawny strands and revelling in the way it proves easier for malachite to bore into umber.

Like this, Dream can see George’s lips stretch, the ache in his jaw being pushed to its furthest as Dream guides the other up, a fruitless attempt not to splutter being ignored by the need to breathe.

It's such a steady pressure, something that George can't help but to find shameful to be getting off on too, and when he glares up into aventurine eyes and does his best to use his tongue he can feel the other crumble underneath him. The tightness of his lips, the hollowness of his cheeks, how could he not fall apart under George's charm?

Breathlessness pants out into the open air, Dream finally allowing for George to pull off, catching his thoughts just to try and tug them all back together.

"Does that feel good?" He taunts, shuffling back so he can hold the base in one hand, flattening his tongue against the head just to hear the strangled groan.

"You know it does."

"I want to hear you say it though," George practically laughs. "Tell me how good my mouth feels."

Smiling. Tilting the head. George loves this thrill far more than he could ever admit. Because his knees are scuffed and his pants are collecting dust from the floor of the other's car, but it's that perfect kind of dirty that makes him linger on every subtle movement.

Every time Dream looks at him with a smile that's too smug to be cocky, with eyes that are widened from their bliss, and with teeth that are sharp and on show when his lips part. George shouldn't keen at the pull of his hair and yet he does, perhaps it's because no matter how hard he wants to deny it Dream is good at this.

At the motions, at the words. They're just pretty people doing their frantic things. And sex will always be one of them.

"So good George," Dream mutters, part condescension, part praise. "You take it so well."

He guides the head between spit slick lips, back straight against the make-shift seat in the corner of a shitty van. It's a wonder this thing doesn't have windows at the back, or at least not ones that can actually catch their bodies as George allows himself to sink down, letting Dream's cock rest heavy on his tongue while he's left uncomfortably hard in his pants—with nothing to relieve the pressure other than his own palm.

"Fucking cocksut." Dream's hip buck up, effectively choking the other for the stitch of a second. "You like it too, can barely go a day without a thing in your mouth."

The words are dark and the tone is darker. It's enough to make George whine and then the thing that makes him sour just the same, bitterness in his eyes as he does his best to scowl and refute each uttered label.

"Don't make that face," Dream tuts. "You know it's true. I mean, if I didn't want to keep you to myself then I'd let the whole team have a go. I bet you'd love that, wouldn't you? Never have to go five seconds without someone's dick in your mouth ever again."

It shouldn't be attractive. Not when Dream is showcasing that exact arrogance that George hates, but perhaps in bed is when he's allowed to do that with no objection. George can say he hates it, but somehow in these situations it makes him that much harder—when usually he's just thinking about how much of an asshole the other is.

Sex is the thing that makes him hazy, nothing more. Putting a new, faker label on their 'relationship' will not change that.

Still, Dream is rattling on. "But I wouldn't let them do that to you," he says, hand on the side of

George's face, fingers tracing so light that George wants to slap them away. "I like it better when I'm the only one that gets to see you like this."

That alone almost causes him to gag, the base of Dream's cock being held by slender fingers when he pulls off just to say, "I'm not yours."

A scoff, cocky, like Dream doesn't believe the words even though they both know George would rather die than being called his.

"That's where you're wrong," he mutters, shaking his head and allowing George to twist his hand where it wraps around him. A wrapped fist slowly jerking him to see if it can cause his voice to shake. "We may only be fucking, but you're moulded to the shape of my cock. Don't say it isn't true."

"I hate you," George grumbles.

He's face level with Dream's dick, feeling it twitch in his hand at the sound. He's feeling generous today, perhaps because he knows that he's been spreading rumours about a less-than-perfect sex life all throughout the last week. So while he would usually bite and tell the other to just get on with it, he simply sits there.

"Don't care," Dream groans, pushing George's hand away to replace it with his own. "I'm so close, *fuck*."

The way his fist moves shouldn't be mesmerising. It's a disgusting sight, dirty, the head of Dream's cock disappearing into his own closed hand. But when he's hard and pretending not to be using the low of his palm to push against himself in his pants, he thinks he could consider anything hot, even Dream.

The very guy who's tipping his head back and letting out such unabashed sounds, whose van is a mess of old clothes and unwashed football jerseys.

Dream, who doesn't even say a word before he's cumming and letting his orgasm wrack strong through his body, hips falling forwards and release spilling onto George's face. His nose, his lips, his cheek. Thinly covered by another man's bliss.

It takes George's mind a second to catch up with what just happened, and when it does, his displeased glare is only matched with Dream's hazy, smiling grin.

"Can you just do it in my mouth next time?" George grumbles. "I'm getting bored of having to ask for wipes whenever you're done."

"Use your sleeve," Dream says, dismissive as he pulls his shorts back up and drags the drawstring tight.

It's enough to knock George back a bit, on his heels, on his knees, remembering exactly why pretending to like Dream is going to be difficult. Because Dream is lazy after his pleasure, he leans back and drags his eyes up an unsteady frame, acting as though George has any other option than to use one hand to wipe what's on the side of his nose off with one finger, and then press the length of that singular digit against his tongue.

He knows exactly what he's doing, but he's hard and Dream's the only one that's bound to get him off when times are tough.

For a football player, a *jock*, Dream is surprisingly pliant when it comes to that sort of stuff. He

thinks with his dick and nothing more—which is exactly why there's never been a fear of catching feelings.

“You’re going to get me hard again.” Blond hair is raked through by marble hands, pulled on as though the sight of pale skin and slight dishevelment is life-threatening.

“Really?” George asks, coy. “Would that be such a bad thing?”

Sharp canines flash for just a second before there are hands on George’s waist, forcing him to laugh when he doesn’t mean to as he’s tugged forwards, legs being forced apart to accommodate the other’s waist.

It’s fast and it’s rough and George barely has time to adjust before he realises just how turned on he is, how even the slightest movement from Dream’s hips against his own is enough to make him pant down against the other’s neck, needy, unashamed, simply revelling in the simple touch that he has.

Expert hands can guide his hips and make his motions wait, they can taunt and then repent at George’s practised pout. There is no doubt in George’s mind that if this didn’t feel so good, then he wouldn’t have been able to agree to a ruse as big as before, but to his avail, it does feel good. And getting off on Dream’s hands running up his shirt, the thrill of doing it all with someone he can barely stand to see, is the only constant need that George has in the world.

Except it seems that as of the last few weeks, Dream and George are not allowed to have sex in peace.

Constant interruptions are certainly one way to ruin someone's libido, and George can't help but let out a sigh (that's certainly not spiked by his wants) when he feels the hands roaming against his body stop.

Dream's lips—the ones that were so close to ghosting over an outstretched neck—draw back with stuttered haste. George trying to drag him back with locked hands on the back of his neck. He knows how to get the other’s attention, he’s done it so many times before.

But Dream knocks the touch away, leaning to the side to try and hear the commotion going on just outside.

For someone that only ever seems to think with his dick, Dream doesn't seem too fussed about George's vulgar position.

The back of Dream’s truck already isn’t a pleasant place, but when there’s banging on the door that’s loud enough to sound like thunder crashing against falling skies, it’s not even enough to call it unbearable anymore.

At first it's just one tap. Then it's two, then it's three. And before they know it the truck is being shook from side to side under the force of knocking hands.

“Don’t answer it,” George groans, although he knows the option isn’t really there, because whoever wants Dream to answer their calls certainly doesn’t seem to be giving up any time soon.

“I have to,” Dream says. Which speaks to something, because when he allows George to shift off of his lap and shuffle back against the side of the van, it’s clear that he isn’t too thrilled about cutting their meeting short either.

The van opens up from the inside, with a small handle that Dream presses dirty knuckles against

and then moves to slide open, and it's so painfully slow that George isn't quite sure what to expect, tugging his legs up to his chest, and letting his hair fall down in single strands in front of his eyes.

And then he wishes he'd spent a bit more time collecting himself, because standing in front of them, staring with straight faces and annoyed brows, is half of the football team.

Half of the whole fucking football team.

"Hey guys," Dream tries to smile, looking up from where he's sticking his head out through the doors.

But they don't seem to be looking at him, as of right now, they all appear to be glaring right through him, eyes settled at the floor in which George sits on.

It's an unpleasant feeling, so many eyes on them at once. And what makes it worse must be the fact that there are no smiles or welcoming expressions on each solemn glance, it's only confusion. Confusion and disgust, thinly veiled aversion.

"This is George," Dream says with a slight gesture, slowly. "My boyfriend."

It's the first time any of them actually acknowledge him.

There must be five at least, tall, huddled together and wearing the same bright green letterman's that George knows from personal experience it's far too warm to be branding.

Each are blurred faces from the field and walking bodies from the halls all melding together to match their appearances. To be frank, George doesn't think any of them know who *he* actually is, so the reason that they're all staring so intently at him, mouths agape and eyes beginning to narrow, only makes him want to shrink back into himself.

Has Dream told them about him? Is that why they're analysing his every move like that? George looks down to try and miss the way one of them stifles a laugh into another's ear.

Eyes to the ground. To himself.

But it's hard not to gasp when he finally sees it.

Because that's when he realises his exact position—how lewdly he's sitting, with a crumpled shirt rucked up against his side, both cheeks flushed pink and chest heaving, and most importantly, Dream's cum still on his face.

*Fuck. That cannot be a good first impression.*

It'd be too obvious to try and wipe it off now, or to hide behind red flushed hands, masking burning embarrassment with a see-through shield. So all George does is sit, pretending that he can still move heavy limbs through the waters of humiliation.

Slow, brown eyes drift along the line of intruders, desperately trying to alleviate from the mortification of remembering his own position by following along a sea of unknown faces.

Most George doesn't recognise, although he's probably seen them in passing.

Except for Punz though, he remembers him, the one that lives with Dream and Sapnap and however many roommates they have up their sleeve. For whatever reason, he sees the other staring straight back at him, red faced and trying not to make his staring too obvious. But it is, and so

George raises an eyebrow and tilts his head as threateningly as he can, just to watch Punz shrink back and see him avert his eyes from the scene.

“Boyfriend?” One of the guys asks, features scrunched up in what can only be described as distaste.

But Dream doesn’t let it get to him.

“Yeah,” he confirms, almost smug when he says it. “Do you guys need something?”

They shake their heads. Quiet mumbling going unknown.

“Just came to look for you,” the same guy says. “If you’re busy then we can go?”

He gestures back, eyes flicking from George to Dream, then back again, awkward.

George doesn't want to know how many times they've seen a sight like this. Either with Dream's ex or the countless hook-ups he more than likely had before George. But he'd have to be an idiot not to notice the treatment he's getting. The ice from each expression, the look of discomfort from every one of Dream's 'friends.'

He almost wants to smile and see what they'd do, if they'd flinch away as though there's a chance of catching something nasty.

“Dream,” George mumbles. His voice is ruined, he never really noticed it.

The reaction to his tone isn't unanimous. A sound only intended for Dream's ears is far louder than anticipated, coming out strangled and strained and far weaker than George had hoped.

He sees one player, a possible face from his comp-sci, standing pressed up against another’s side and wearing a slight quirk to his lips as a laugh is held back, amusement muffled behind the palm of his hand.

It’s not an interesting response because George can notice a few of the other’s smiling ever so slightly, as though the voice so wrecked and a position so indecent, truly is something to chuckle over, but what makes him double back is the familiarity of it all. How a heartbeat picks up at the simple sight.

Recognition is as quick as it is deadly, and the fact that the very same guy that spotted George in Dream’s letterman so long ago, is also on the football team, doesn’t seem to be as much of a coincidence as he could originally hope.

But the fact that Dream's friend group is composed of a group of complete dickheads isn't surprising. They say people gravitate to those who they're the most alike, after all.

“If you wouldn't mind leaving,” Dream nods, gaze flicking back for half a moment. “It’d be very much appreciated.”

“Yeah,” his friend mumbles.

There’s stepping back and then there’s retreat. This is retreat, like pulling their eyes away from the scene is the best they can do until the doors are ultimately pulled shut, Dream letting out a scoff and slumping once they’re back in the near dark.

“Why didn’t you just go with them?” George questions.

At long last, he brings up his sleeve to use his hand and wipe the cooling mess from his cheek. No wonder he got so many stares—if he didn't know better, then he could have mistaken it for the team just not liking him.

"I didn't get you off," Dream shrugs.

If he was ever affected by his team's presence then he doesn't show it, simply slinking forwards to get back into a comfortable position, their intrusion going unmentioned. George still knows better though.

Dream's not the type to put off his own responsibilities just to make sure George walks away from their situation feeling satisfied. No, he's far too self involved for that—never comes over unless he's getting something out of it straight away, never does anything out of the kindness of his heart, because there's always a plan hidden behind it.

So when he smiles and cocks his head to one side, flashing ivory teeth past pink lips, George knows better than to trust it. Hell, he can't even stand to see it.

"So what?" He asks, hesitant.

"Well," Dream muses. "I kind of want to eat you out."

Two hands come to wrap around George's waist, pulling him forward, pressing cool palms up underneath his shirt. Rough fingers splay against the small of his back. It's a touch too sweet and sudden for him to protest, not when he's being dragged up and onto Dream's lap, off of the dirty floors and onto skin, soft.

"You do?" George asks, trying and failing not to relax into the touch. "In the back of your truck?"

A noise of confirmation echoes from Dream's throat. It's nothing to trust and George certainly doesn't believe that it's untipped morality causing Dream to press his nose against the side of his neck, breathing against his space and dragging light lips across his skin, but he doesn't pull away. Because at the end of the day, George is still the one that'll benefit from another's generosity.

And with how out of character that it is, he'd be a fool for letting the opportunity of a newer, better Dream, one that actually cares about how someone else is doing, slip from his grasp.

So, "Okay," is what he says, allowing himself to fall forwards, hands on his legs, a smile against his shoulder. "I won't complain."

And if that turned to sex on the floor of Dream's van, legs tangled up and limbs anchored up on another's shoulder, sobbing, shaking, pleading as George has his orgasm ripped straight from his body time and time again, then nobody will know except for them.

Well, them and anyone who passed a shaking truck on their way out of campus that day.

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It's getting late and George can barely keep his eyes open.

By the time night falls, the football team is still playing, sweaty, tired, and yet still going as though they have something to prove. From his place on the bleachers, George can see it all—umber eyes



cast out to watch the scope of the field, noticing each stumble, each pass. He doesn't need to *like* American football to watch it, and right now he definitely isn't having fun, but he's there and he's coping, witnessing it all.

*All*, might be an overstatement though. Because George may be there physically, but his mind is definitely drifting, especially with how boneless he's felt since he was walked from Dream's truck to here. Fucked out, delirious, and wincing when he finally sat down, only to met with Karl's smiling face.

It was good for appearances though. Because with the way his hair was sticking up from being pulled so hard, and how both he and Dream smelt so unmistakably of sex, there's no chance that Karl is doubting their arrangement. It's so good of an act that George almost catches himself smiling at the memory.

He doesn't though, because that'd be ludicrous.

Sitting with aching legs and a mind that's turned foggy from such dulcet activities is his reality. The field is large and George doesn't even know what he's watching, too busy figuring out how he's going to limp from the bleachers down to the car park once they're finally done.

His state is humiliating but there's not much that he can do about it. It's all just a waiting game from here on out.

At least sex is good, it's more than good in fact—all George can really think about it the way Dream's handprints are bruising under his shirt, the way his skin will turn rosy red tomorrow simply because of the way it's been manhandled the day before.

Dream knows what he's doing in bed, simple as.

So now, George sits, waiting for the ride he was promised home, and the dinner he was promised alongside it, all while Karl tries to pry the embarrassing details out from between pink lips.

"You guys had *sex*," Karl whispers, shaking George's arm to really push his point across.

The response is tired. "Shut up."

"No," Karl hums. "Oh my god, you guys are so obvious."

The bleachers at night are far less welcoming than they are at day. Although, even then, George has never found them too embracing. In all honesty, he doesn't even know why he agreed to stay. Free food and a ride home when he's not in the right frame of mind are certain incentives though, and the company isn't too bad, nor the entertainment.

Because George may not be a *fan* of football in general, but he can certainly understand the appeal of hot, sweaty men, in practice jerseys and baggy shorts, running around for sport.

Dream has looked at him approximately four times. Once, to check that George is still there. Another to throw him a glare when he hears George laugh at a tumble, and twice more with furrowed brows.

It's tiring to be in his presence and yet George still hasn't made the decision to leave. Why would he when this is the perfect opportunity to showcase their new situation to all of their friends? Dream should be thanking him, truly.

Each pass and each throw goes unacknowledged in front of his eyes, George letting Karl talk his

ear off to his side, and he knows that the other usually comes here during practice anyway (to see Sappap, to cheer and applaud) but it's like a look into the other side when George casts his eyes out to the field, perhaps for the first time actually noticing how many people *really* care about the football team and its whereabouts.

Fools—the lot of them—because at least while George is here he understands that nobody on that field actually gives a shit about them up on the stands. Dream only acknowledges him because he puts out, the rest of the team are just the same. Hell, George wouldn't be surprised if half of the relationships are just as fake as his is. Self-absorbed assholes rarely get the girl.

“Relax,” Karl says, nudging him slightly. “It'll be over soon.”

“What?”

“You looked antsy,” Karl explains. “I know the drills look tough but they do them each practice, Dream's going to be fine.”

For the first real time, George casts his eyes out to the field. Where, a motion like wrestling seems to be going on amongst the players. Marbled, he scrunches up his face.

“I wasn't worried about that.”

“Sure you weren't.” A soft laugh, Karl coming shoulder-to-shoulder just to jostle him in place. “You really are a softie, George.”

He bites back a scoff. “Am not.”

“You are,” Karl muses. “It's sweet.”

*Sweet.* George is not *sweet*.

“Look, they're going off now,” Karl points out, gesturing to where the whole team has congregated by the door just off the side of the field.

Where the locker room is led to, and the mess of bodies angle towards.

Blond hair is obvious in the sea, perhaps because George, even from here knows which strands belong to the other, from pulling those locks so often and becoming familiar with the very way they curl.

He doesn't get the chance to try and pick apart any of the others though, because before he has the chance to even breathe, Karl is grabbing him by the wrist and forcing him to stand, proclaiming, “We can wait for them down there,” as they go.

The path is cold and George doesn't know it as well as the other. So he follows along and pretends that he still has the energy to smile.

They end up waiting for around thirty minutes, on top of the two hours they spent just watching practice. And George doesn't know how Karl is able to do this almost every day, especially without company, because that must take some serious dedication, both to his boyfriend and the sport. And in all honesty, even if this wasn't fake, George doesn't know if he's the type to ever entertain that kind of life.

But once the wait is over, the doors open once again, coming from the hallway in simple steps, is Dream first, followed by Sappap, who lights up as soon as he notices who's waiting for him.

“Karl!” He exclaims, jogging up to get his hug.

The movements are boisterous and hold no regard for the other’s taking up that space, but no matter how annoyed he feels by it, George doesn’t make a comment. Not when he sees Karl’s joy at the expression.

Night comes with the cold.

He’s still standing by himself.

There are footsteps wandering in his direction, he looks up to see how the other comes to stand, just off the side of the field right in front of him.

“George,” Dream says, slowing to a halt. “You waited for me?”

He almost seems surprised, eyebrows pulling up into a forged expression.

“Not for you,” George tries to say, although the accusation itself seems to have made him bashful. “For the food.”

Smugness should have no place on Dream’s features, the angled, the conventionally pretty. They sit there nonetheless, taunting George with a singular smirk as he tries not to let it get to him.

“How was practice?” he asks, not really interested, just trying to pass the time.

“Fine,” Dream shrugs. “I don’t usually have my own little cheerleader waiting for me after though, so that’s a bonus.”

“Shut up,” George groans, rolling his eyes. “Are we going now?”

There is nothing he wants more than a hot meal and to be sitting in the comfort of his own room right now, especially after he’s been waiting out here for so long. And when brown eyes, bronzed and wide, have to angle up to catch the other’s, they surely show this notion. Holding the same boredom that George makes sure they always do.

Although, malachite doesn't appear to be self-assured in the way it always is. The expression on Dream's face is somewhat new, restrained, like he's getting ready to say something that George can't quite piece together.

Scrutiny. Spit it out.

“About that,” Dream laughs, head tipped to the side. “It’s kind of funny, really, but I can't drive you back, the team and I are getting pizza.”

It takes a moment for the words to sink in. Another for George’s shoulders to slump.

“What?”

Dream nods. “Yeah, sorry.”

A pause. One. Two.

“Wait, so you can’t take me home,” George repeats slowly, mind not quite caught up to his tongue's own curve. “Because you’ve been asked to go get pizza with the guys you practise with every single day.”

“Yes,” Dream nods.

“Unbelievable.”

It shouldn't be a surprise. No, not at all, but for some reason George really hoped that after spending the last few hours watching guys he doesn't know and/or like play a game that he has both no interest in and no care to learn about, that he'd be at least gifted with not having to walk home. That and the dinner he was *promised*.

But promises clearly mean nothing to Dream, as he demonstrates time and time again.

“I've been here for hours, Dream, does that count for nothing?”

“You could have left whenever you wanted.”

Hate is brewing in the pit of George's stomach, churning his insides together as he smiles bitterly. “I cannot believe you. I'm meant to be your *boyfriend* remember?”

It's a low blow, especially considering the fact that nothing about them is in any way real. But if Dream treats all of his partners like this then it's no shock that his ex thinks he's unfit for someone new.

From the doors just to the side, the group that were formerly on the field wander out, brunched together while few bid their dues and trickle away. They all form one monster, many legs, many heads, and the man right in front of him, the one standing with dirt blond hair and a sheepish smile, straightened posture and baggy, work-out clothes clinging to his frame, is the one in charge. The ‘captain’ as they call it.

A scowl settles firmly on George's face as his gaze falls from the other's, finding interest in the group so many metres away that seem to have stopped just to watch them converse.

“I have to,” Dream stresses, leaning forwards like these words are meant for nobody else. “You'll be fine getting back by yourself. I don't have to drive you anywhere.”

“I know I will,” George frowns. “But you made a promise, and I at least hoped you could stick to that.”

“Dream,” shouts a voice from just behind. The group, the monster. “Are you coming or what?”

“Wait a second, Jake,” Dream yells back, not even bothering to turn his head and causing George to flinch from the sudden loudness.

“Jesus,” he mutters, glancing away.

“Don't make a big deal out of it,” Dream tries to say. “I'll get you dinner some other time, the team is important.”

“Isn't having a boyfriend meant to be important too?”

“Fake boyfriend,” Dream corrects. “And no, not when the team already thinks I'm ditching them for you.”

*Of course they do.*

“Whatever,” George huffs, he's trying not to let his emotions show but it's slightly difficult when he's been hanging around doing fuck all for the last 2 hours, just to be let down. “Don't call me

later. I won't be in the mood."

The switch is instantaneous, any pity that Dream may have had being replaced by the arrogant ignorance that he loves to put on. The shake of the head which makes curling hair shake, the subtle frown that manages to still spread across half his features.

"George, don't sulk."

"I'm not," he states. "I don't care."

"You're acting like you care,"

Everything in Dream's tone reeks of cockiness. The kind of disgust that makes him hateable, the lack of empathy that makes even George scowl.

Dream is not allowed to think he can mess with George's day and get away completely unscathed. He's not allowed to believe that his actions form any impact on George's own life, other than proving a nuisance. An insignificant, cocky, nuisance.

"I don't *care* though," George huffs, crossing his arms in front of his chest. Clouds still form in front of his mind, causing his thoughts to seem hazy as he tries to put them together, and the way eyes turn down and glaze with condescension, only serves to dampen his mood that much more. "Stop trying to analyse me."

Dream rolls his eyes. "God, you're so annoying."

Sarcasm, dripping black from his tongue. "Good one."

And a staring match has so many faces. It starts with a hardened gaze, burning bright like the effort itself will be enough to rip holes through paling flesh.

George has practised this look so many times, and it seems Dream has too—given how he moulds aventurine eyes into sharpened blades, using them to signal his stubbornness.

It's not the act, more the principle. George should be thankful he doesn't have to spend any more time with the others but the fact that it wasn't even up to him is what turns a blessing sour. So he stands with scorn in his gaze, hoping it'll make someone taller fall.

But it's difficult to focus when they so clearly have an audience—the football team, minus Sapnap, of course, who's standing to one side making up for lost time with Karl.

They aren't blatant with their staring, but they certainly aren't subtle, and soon enough, when time has passed and Dream has still made no effort to back down, George can see a figure stray from the group, wandering across the field and straight towards them.

"Dream," the guy says, 'Jake' George assumes him to be—far too peppy and clapping the other on the back as he stops by their side—clearly ignoring the death glare that's sent his way. "What's taking so long?"

"Nothing," George answers before the other can get a word in. "He'll be going now."

A stern tone, talking down as though he's something to be berated, "George."

And if Dream thinks that George will really take well to that then he's surely mistaken. "Bye."

"Woah," Jake says, mediating with a broad smile. "Trouble in paradise, already?"

It's said with gleaming eyes, amusement behind tall features, and the guy stands broad and towering over them both, dark hair still wet from what George assumes to be the shower.

Something about it rubs him the wrong way. From the stance, to the cocksure expression, then the way Jake's eyes scan up and down his body, animalistic, George wants to back away as soon as he can.

But all he does is scowl. "You're really friends with this guy?" he asks to Dream.

"Damn, feisty," Jake comments, nudging the blond. "You really know how to pick 'em, dude."

"Fuck off."

Dream interrupts before it can go any further. "Jake, let's go,"

"You're not going to bring him with?"

George raises an eyebrow, hands fitting snug into his pockets.

"To get pizza with us?" Dream asks.

A quick study of their faces and George is stepping back, pretending that he's not a clear observer. This isn't his territory, no matter how mouthy he can usually get.

"Yeah?" Jake drawls. "Sap brings Karl all the time."

As though it's the very first time that the thought crossed the other's mind, Dream turns to George with a slight lift to his features, the turn being mirrored by that of the other. Jake, in a muscle shirt and basketball shorts, tugging on the collar around his neck and extending an arm, smiling as though he truly believes that this is a viable option.

A part of Dream's tone is tired. "George?"

"Not a chance," he says almost instantly, a sharp edge to the corners of his voice. "I'm not spending my free time with you and you're dumb jock friends."

"That's a little rude, isn't it," Jake comments. And truly, George is starting to detest him more with each passing second. He turns to Dream with a tilt of the head. "Thought you said your boyfriend was a softie at heart."

"He is," Dream says, pointed. "Aren't you sweetie?"

If he had more energy, then George would glare.

"No goodbye kiss?" Jake asks, slowly stepping back and bringing Dream with him.

"We're not that kind of couple."

Blond hair is pushed back, revealing furrowed brows. "I'll call you later, okay?"

Dream is looking at him as though this is the final straw.

It's only the start of their so-called relationship and it's already nearing the end—George feeling the gazes of many tearing holes into his skin.

Their animosity can't go unnoticed, but Dream's trying so desperately to keep himself from lashing

out, biting his lip so hard it's close to drawing blood. Perhaps, George will relent. Perhaps, he'll make this easier for the both of them.

"Yeah okay," he sighs, smiling as fakely as he can. "Talk to you later."

Shoulders lower. Dream's expression is unclear. "Bye, George."

And then they leave—two bodies turn and wander away from the slab of stone on which George still stands. He doesn't want to watch where they go but he does anyway, bored, careful eyes trained on each movement, up until they find the rest of the group and get swarmed by jeers and open arms.

They're different people. A clique, a new branch. And just the echoes of their voices causes disgust to run up George's spine, his feet turning before his head as he tries to find his own way off of the pitch.

Karl beckons him over with a single wave.

"Hey," he says, eyebrows tugging together when he peers behind him. "Where's Dream?"

"Not coming," George shrugs.

It's a clipped answer, too short and too snappy to be read without question, but George is too tired to put on a pleased front. He's pissed, simple as. His ride and his own personal wallet has abandoned him to go spend a few more hours kicking about with the rest of the fucking football team. Who would be pleased about that?

"Oh," Karl hums, doing his best to study his expression. "Well that's fine, Sapnap can take us."

"Will he pay for dinner too?"

"Depends," Karl starts. "*Why* is Dream not coming?"

And there's no point in lying to him. They're walking to the car already, legs moving without the words to go along with them. Soon enough they'll be catching up with Sapnap and getting into the back of his shitty little car, back in their dorm in no time at all.

"Team outing," George explains. "They're getting food together."

"So he ditched you?"

George smiles.

It only takes a second for Karl's mood to dampen. "Yeah, we'll buy you dinner."

The day has been long and scuffed shoes scrape along the narrow path. They skate over little pebbles and kick small sticks to see them roll along the ground. Anger simmers so quickly, flashing to irritation then displeasure, and when he opens the door to the car and sits down with more force than strictly necessary, it's clear that his emotions need reigning in just a tad.

George isn't surprised, really, but that doesn't mean he's not a little annoyed.

---

Come midnight, he's sitting on his bed, eating noodles out of a pot and trying not to roll his eyes as he slyly watches Karl and Sapnap spoon feed each other bites of their own respective meals.

He's already gotten an earful from Karl, of how he can't believe that Dream, his *boyfriend* of all people would just abandon him like that. And it came to the point where George just wanted to announce that it was all fake so he would stop being bothered, but at the end of the day his plan's still working.

Not once has Karl asked him to go to a party, and not once has he looked at him with pity caused by George's own hand. In some sick sort of way, everything is going to plan.

"It's bullshit," Karl complains, turning to Sapnap. "Like you can spend time away from the team, why can't he?"

"He's the captain," Sapnap shrugs. "He kind of has to."

"Not when he promised to take George home."

From his own bed, George mumbles his uncaring agreement.

In all honesty, now that he's had a second to think about it, he really doesn't give a shit if Dream didn't want to take him home. He got here in the end anyway, who cares if *Dream* was or wasn't the one that took him?

He stabs his fork into the pot, twisting the noodles around just to calculate how big of a serving he can actually fit into his mouth at once.

"I guess," he hears Sapnap sigh, trying to calm Karl down with a hand running up the small of his back.

"He made a promise and he should have followed through," the other continues. "I am not having him abandon my best fucking friend so he can go throw around a ball for a few more hours."

"Karl, it's fine," George attempts. "I don't care."

"You should," Karl counters. "If he doesn't treat you right then you have to tell him to get it together or you're breaking up with him."

"I am?"

"Yes," Karl seethes.

And quite honestly, George is too stunned to properly respond.

This is not what he wanted. He wanted Karl to be happy, not murderous, but apparently Dream just has to make everything worse. It seems, that the simple fucking task of pretending to be a good boyfriend for a few weeks is already proving too much for him. George doesn't even know why he tried.

It's Dream after all, only ever looks out for number one.

There's awkward silence and the rustling of sheets, Karl being dragged back so his side is pressed up against Sapnap's, their thighs touching and arms tangled. (They're a cute couple, George hates to admit. Somehow, even just looking at them makes him have to force down a smile.)

"Next time you see that idiot you're going to smack some sense into him," Karl mutters under this



breath, body turned so Sapnap can feed him off of the same fork he was using just before. "If he breaks George's heart, you'll be the one going out to buy the rom-coms."

"And the ice cream," George supplies.

"And the ice cream."

They laugh and they quiet, and get on with eating on separate beds, tiredness coursing through George's bones in the way it has been from the very second he sat down on scratchy sheets.

His shoes are sitting by the door, and his hoodie is far too large, drowning him in fabric when he tucks his legs underneath him and sits with his back in the corner of the room. It's comfortable, really, but every time he looks up he catches sight of his roommate's and the guy he invited in, making it almost seem as though he has to be quiet not to interrupt them and their casual touches.

"Hey, can we put something on?" He asks, when the silence gets too stifling.

"Yeah, sure," Karl says, muffled. "What do you want to watch?"

"I don't mind."

A hum.

Movie nights are often composed of Karl's laptop sitting open on the counter between both of their beds.

An actual TV would be far too expensive, not to mention impractical for lugging in and out of their dorm room each holiday, and so the birth of Karl's beat up computer screen and a shared subscription to a random streaming service began.

They choose some action film, one that George had seen a thousand times but never actually cared enough about to understand the plot. And it's comfortable but George can't help but feel as though he's third wheeling, intruding upon a moment that should just be shared by two.

The knot in his chest is as heavy as the burden on his shoulders. The one he'd been wanting to get rid of. Because if Dream had just done as asked and taken George home then they wouldn't be in this situation right now. George shouldn't be feeling as though Karl pities him even more over a false fucking relationship.

God, it'd probably be easier if he just found someone that actually wanted to date him. As difficult as that may be. Because George knows he's difficult, and he knows he's hard to get along with, it's no secret that no one actually likes him.

Other than Karl of course, and the ones that like to make him mad for their own amusement.

So for now, this is as good as it's going to get. George is stuck pretending to like the most egotistical guy on the planet, Dream, who only wants him for sex and to prove his ex girlfriend wrong, all while he has to pretend that he's getting out enough. And doesn't only leave campus when he has to.

(It's not difficult to feel unwanted when his only relationship is based on fake feelings.)

They watch the film. George stays silent.

---

There's a knock on the door when they're around halfway through their second movie.

Usually it's up to Karl to answer it, seeing as he's the one who invites people around most of the time, but when George turns to look he sees no movement from that side of the room. Only Karl tucked up against Sapnap's chest, lying lengthwise on his bed and seeming far too comfortable to want to stand.

The knocking continues. Loud, the rapping of knuckles against plain oak wood.

*Who the fuck decides it's appropriate to visit so late?* George wonders, sighing when he places his noodles down on the table to his side.

Annoyance bubbles up so quickly that it's impossible to keep down, the realisation that no one else is going to answer it only hitting when it's been half a minute and the sound is still continuing, likely disturbing every person in their hall.

Rolling his eyes is second nature, pulling his shirt down as he moves is next.

"I'll get it then," George announces, standing with wobbling legs.

It earns a small hum of acknowledgement from the others, who wave him away and place their attention back on the glaring screen.

The area between the door and the beds is only short, able to be passed in nine short steps, and George has travelled it so many times that by the time he has his palm wrapped around the handle, he hasn't even given himself the time to really catch up.

The door opens quickly. The offender is pushed back and the frame is slammed shut upon first glance.

*Breathe.* George's back to the door. The hallway seems so quiet at such a late point. To raise his voice would be to make every single person on this god forsaken floor hate him, and thankfully, George has some common sense, so he doesn't open his mouth before his mind. Still, even his whisper-shouts manage to hold just enough anger.

"What the fuck are you doing here?"

"Hey," Dream says, almost sheepishly, his hand coming up to rub over the back of his head. "I wanted to check up on you?"

*Check up on you?* For a moment, George just stands there, staring at him with open, unblinking eyes. The words, spoken with a honeyed, almost unsure tone, float around in his mind and refuse to settle, because why on earth would Dream be here to *check up on him* so many hours after they last spoke?

But after a second more of puzzled watching, seeing Dream shift back and forth on the balls of his feet, George finally pieces it together. Because this must be a trick, it has to be Dream's sick way of putting their almost-argument to a close. He's only here so that he can make sure it's all behind them, that George isn't actually angry enough to stop putting out.

And it's so rich, so unbelievably absurd, that George doesn't even know how to respond.

"Why?" he ends up snapping, hoping that his displeasure is evident on his face.

Even if it is, Dream just shrugs. “To see if my boyfriend got home safe.”

“Newsflash Dream, we’re not actually dating,” George deadpans.

He’s tired—far too tired for this.

“I know that,” Dream explains, head lowering ever so slightly. “I don’t want you to think I’m a bad fake boyfriend though.”

At the very edge of his tone, there’s a quietness that George isn’t quite familiar with—one that makes his eyebrows scrunch when he tries to place the blue laced emotion. Watercolour cheeks and green, bashful eyes. Nobody told him that having to put up with Dream would mean having to try and understand his late-night thoughts too.

“Why would I care if you were?”

“I don’t know,” Dream shrugs, straightening up almost immediately. It’s like a snap and then that pink is gone, replaced by scorn that George can only describe as familiar. “*God*, do you ever stop being a bitch?”

“Nope.”

It’s not a good quality, but he’ll own up to it.

Unlike the other, who will never understand his own arrogance.

There will always be a reason that George can’t stand him. His lack of delicacy, the ego that thinks he’s allowed to show up whenever he likes and get what he wants. It’s not just stubbornness that makes him difficult to bear, George can’t stand his type, he knows them all, the whole football team is like him, after all.

The hallway is quiet. George is close to reaching back to leave.

“Okay, I’m here because you didn’t make a great impression on the team,” Dream admits, speaking with such hesitance it’s almost like he fears the words will hurt the other’s *feelings*. “They think you’re a downgrade from Bella.”

“As if,” George scoffs. Maybe he wasn’t the nicest to them but in his defence he wasn’t having the best of times, he wasn’t exactly caught at his best moment.

“They do,” Dream shrugs. “You’ve got to be nicer to them.”

*Nicer*.. Nicer is being weaker, nicer is opening himself up to be played by men like Dream, like the rest of the football team, and if being considered rude is what’s going to claw him to safety then George will continue his mean streak no matter what. There’s no chance on earth that he’s going to allow himself to be used.

“They’re assholes,” he mutters. Stubbornness circling blue in his tone.

“You’ve never spoken to any of them.”

“I can read people pretty well.”

The sigh that leaves Dream’s mouth is so far gone it may as well be an admission of defeat.

“Do you want to do this or not?” He asks. “Because if you’re just going to be difficult then there’s

no point in us even trying to keep this up.”

George’s lips curve down. “How am I being difficult?”

It’s a dumb question, one that’s met with a shake of the head and pink lips flattening out into an unamused line. To see displeasure on angled features shouldn’t put a rise to George’s frame, but it does, and he can only equate it to being able to see emotions so blatant on the other’s face. He almost wonders how many expressions Dream can make. If the happy ones just look like this, are just as intoxicating.

But he likes this face in particular because it’s reserved just for him. With no one else is Dream as expressive, acidic eyes and sickened, marble skin.

Nectar lips form words with white hot tension. “You know how.”

He does. That much he’ll admit.

“Fine,” George sighs, resigned. “I can be nicer to the team, if you stop making Karl think you’re being a shitty boyfriend.”

It’s an easy deal. An eye for an eye. Just an expansion on their regular, sex-hazed rules.

“A shitty boyfriend?”

Dream shouldn’t look as confused as he does.

“Yeah,” George confirms. “Ditching people when you don’t know how they’re going to get home is usually not good guy behaviour.”

“You had Karl.”

“Not the point.”

Bitterness. Resentment. Such see-through stares.

“Fine,” Dream says eventually, smile pulled so taut that it’s near ripping his face in two. He looks unamused, as though these dealings are the last thing he wants to be doing right now but honestly, does he think that this is George’s biggest fantasy? To be putting up with a guy that clearly wouldn’t give him more than half a glance in any other situation. “You’ll be nicer around my friends and I’ll keep up the caring boyfriend act.”

“Good.”

They’re silent for a little bit, George moves to open the door, the handle twisting under his grip. And he doesn’t let it swing too far, only just catching Karl glance up as though he only just noticed he left, before turning to see Dream still holding in place.

“Are you going to go now?”

“Do you want me to?”

George hates that Dream is asking him, that he’s acting as though he values his information. Because he doesn’t, that much is obvious, he’s never cared before and he certainly doesn’t care now. There’s no chance on earth that George will ever fall for his convoluted tricks.

“Dream, is that you?”

George knows Karl's 'tense' voice like the back of his hand. It's no surprise that Dream doesn't though, and takes confusion and anger and slight, slight amusement, as a genuine question.

"Yeah."

The doorway is narrow and George does his best to cover it. Karl's voice echoes through the gaps, nonetheless. "Are you coming in?"

*No. Say no.* George doesn't know how much more of his presence that he can take.

But Dream just smiles, tilting his head to point his question straight at the other. "Am I invited in?"

"It's late," George tries to say. "You should probably be getting home."

"I can stay out another hour."

He knows that Dream is doing it just to spite him, to annoy him, because for whatever reason that seems to be Dream's favourite task.

Since the very first day they met, that greeting in the kitchen, then the blatant disrespect as soon as George turned down his advances, Dream has loved to be a nuisance. And maybe George has always fed into it a little too, but that's just how he is to everyone.

It doesn't make Dream *special* in any way.

Still, it's no secret that George isn't himself when he's tired.

Karl has said it time and time again—that when George has inklings of sleep in his system, he's far easier to talk with, far less on edge all the goddamn time. And perhaps that's because when he's tired, George doesn't think.

He allows his guard to slip momentarily, his bitter words have far less bite, and he's never been as good with keeping himself to himself. Staying safe and not allowing guys like Dream to wander their way into his bed, feed him charm in spoonful's and blur his sense of right and wrong.

But it is late, and George for whatever reason, is still coming down from that overwhelming high, the one from hours ago, that he sat out in his own mind on the bleachers.

So he may regret it tomorrow, but Dream is looking at him as though he actually does want to come in, like he really does have a few hours to spare.

*A fuckboy, a player, those eyes are what they do best.*

George looks up for just a second.

"Fine," he mutters. "Don't even dare sitting too close to me."

Strong hands come to hold George's waist, turning his torso and pressing his back against Dream's chest so they can walk in perfect tandem.

"Wouldn't dream of it, babe."

"And take your shoes off."

Then when they sit, Dream goes down first, immediately making himself comfortable with the space as though he knows each contour of the room better than the people that actually live there.

He messes with the sheets and raises his eyebrows at Sapnap, who looks away with a teasing smile, and then gestures for George to come sit beside him, tapping the empty space and then smiling up.

It's obnoxious, fake, and George wants to punch the smug grin off of his face as soon as he sees it, but he's not in the position to. And so he finds himself taking a seat on the edge of his bed instead, trying to find a position that will allow him room by himself and not be obvious enough for the other's to actually pick up.

But those attempts are proven fruitless, because as soon as George has picked up his food and is getting himself accommodated to the movie playing ahead of them, there's an arm around his waist, strength dragging him back so he's flat against the warmth of another's chest.

The bed is small, only a twin sized mattress on the top, and so the way that Dream tries to sort them out is downright ridiculous—their position somewhat mimicking that of Karl and Sapnap, huddled together, comfortable almost.

If it weren't for the fact that Dream's chest is slightly cosy to push up against, then George would have pulled himself away within an instant. But Dream runs hot and George's skin is cold, and so he allows it to happen, doing his best not to flare when he catches Karl's upturned eyes. (Question, acceptance, possible glee.)

"What's up?" He hears Dream ask, trying not to shift in his seat.

"Nothing."

But quite frankly that's not true. Because this isn't real. It's not sweet, and it's nothing for George to be relaxing into, so why he's allowing himself to be *cuddled* by Dream of all people, is certainly cause for concern.

When umber eyes drift up, they see Karl, who sits with his arm stolen by another, doing his best to discreetly pull faces at the pairs positioning.

"Shut up," George grumbles under his breath, but nobody hears it except for him.

Well, himself and Dream, who only pulls George closer at the sound.

The movie plays loud and yet all George can focus on is how much his own skin burns at how Karl mocks a kiss in the air, eyes between them both, mock falling to the floor from his lips.

But he still isn't trying to pull away. Not yet at least, because Dream may be a dick, even on a good day, but he's attentive at least, with his legs on George's bed, splayed open, and bent at the knee, and his back against the wall, far enough away for it to not be too uncomfortable, and yet close enough for anyone to see them and think that they truly are something they're not.

*Together. Not at all enemies.*

There's a hand on George's side, it moves to his stomach and sits just underneath his shirt, refusing to let him budge simply because of the strength that's being put on it. In all honesty, George isn't even horny, not with Karl nor Sapnap sat in front of him, so he really doesn't know why he's sat here, allowing himself to be touched by Dream, 'Grade A Asshole', and not having a word to say about it.

For reasons unbeknownst, George's throat is dry.

"Stop wriggling."

Momentarily, his head turns to the side, blond hair, a straight jawline, it's all within arm's distance. Attraction is different to like, George knows himself well enough to separate those feelings.

And out of the corner of his eye he can see Karl smiling at them, like a proud parent, and frankly, it makes him happy. It makes George feel as though for once, he's really doing something right.

It's not right though, it's weird, different, definitely shouldn't be happening, but again, Dream is warm—different to the way he heats up after sex. Instead of flushed skin and panting breaths, Dream is warm in the way that makes it difficult for George to not sink back into the touch.

He may be an awful person, but George can't deny that he likes *this*.

"Is this okay?" Dream asks, quiet so that the others don't hear, careful so George can pull away at any moment.

And the falling breath on his skin is enough to make the hairs on the back of George's neck stand up straight, his shoulders raising before he forces them down, letting Dream, the guy that's never genuinely cared about another person's comfort, tug George closer on his own damn bed.

It's just for appearances, George knows that, so he nods and allows the other to hook his chin on his shoulder, almost pressing their cheeks together and letting soft skin hover. It's odd and it's strange and when George brings his gaze back down to his food, he can't bring himself to take another bite, nor jostle the position that they're sitting in.

Yet as soon as Dream realises where umber eyes have drifted, he's doing his best to shift so that they can both see Karl's laptop open on the shelf ahead, and that George's arms are free to move as he pleases.

Having a fake boyfriend is weird.

Still, George shouldn't be allowing himself to smile.

## Chapter End Notes

comments/kudos are extremely extremely appreciated!!

[my twitter](#)

And.. back to recommending fics in my authors notes:

this one is literally amazing 10/10, a long completed multichap that I couldn't recommend more,

[check it out](#)

And this one is so sweet istg, I'm not usually a fan of kid fics but dream in this is such a sweetheart and george is a little idiot, i love it [here's the link](#)

Leave kudos maybe :]

## Chapter 4

### Chapter Summary

There's no one out right now, clubs up and running, essays due in days. Right now George feels like the only person on the planet, fragile when he lets his hate turn into ice.

"Thank you," he mutters, prideful until the end. "For apologising."

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When George wakes up he's outside of his sheets.

Shivering, in a thousand-degree heat.

For reasons unbeknownst, he's fully clothed, wearing the exact same thing he was yesterday. And his hand grips the side of his bed, fingers splaying apart as they try to find their place before ultimately landing on nothing other than the wooden frame stagnant behind his head.

It's disorienting to say the least. Because the room is dark and George is cold, drowned in heavy fabrics and the softness of a single cover, but cold nonetheless.

To his side, there's the shadow of a movement. Black, greyish figures stretching limbs in the dark so they show up casted in the absence of light, there on the flat of the wall ahead. Two bodies, not just one, tangled together under the thinnest blanket—George can see their first motion, he looks away as soon as he's come to realise their second.

"What the fuck?" He exclaims, sitting up as quickly as he can to crowd against the wall.

But he can't.

For what must be the first time, George looks down to see two arms wrapped around his waist, loose, not holding but certainly there. And then the presence behind him becomes that much more obvious. The warmth, the weight. George can't stop his head from spinning.

Dream is in his bed. *Why the fuck is Dream in his bed?*

It's almost enough to send him into a panic, distancing himself from what's by his side like the touch can burn if it's left for too long. But it proves far easier said than done when he tries to shuffle away only to be dragged right back, clinged onto like Dream thinks he's his pillow, soft and warm, and somehow his.

*Too much. Too fucking much.*

Breathing is loud, thoughts are louder, and on the other side of the room something starts to stir.

"What?" Karl asks, throat croaky as he comes out from underneath his sheets. Lips red, hair tousled. Next to him, Sapnap is the same.



“You guys are gross,” George scoffs, shifting backwards then forwards then doing his best to find the position that’ll keep him away from the man below. “Not when I’m in here too.”

“We didn’t do anything,” Karl mumbles, though his smile says it’s anything but the truth. “And you can’t talk, not when Mr. Ditches-You-Then-Pretends-Everything-Is-Fine managed to talk his way into your bed.”

George’s glare is like ice, when the hands around his waist try to tighten, he doesn’t know if he should drop it or let it sit.

“What?”

In the morning, Dream’s voice is low, gravelly in the way he’s only ever heard when he’s whispering filth into George’s own ear. It’s not attractive, George won’t let it be, but when he glances down and sees blond hair sticking up in every possible direction, scrunched brows and a stare that’s hazy more than it is intent, he can’t help but wish the worst guys didn’t have to be the hottest one’s too.

“George?”

The glare is back. “Yes?”

“What’re you doing h’re?” The words slur together, they become muffled when Dream attempts to burrow down into the crook of George’s neck, finding his shoulder and his chest and clearly not giving a shit about the pair of faces that are definitely watching this display.

“I should be asking you that,” George huffs, using his elbow to shove the other away so Dream can press against the wall and not his skin. “Why the fuck are you in my bed?”

“Wha—” The touch is lingering, smushed against his arm when Dream tries to crawl his way back—tired and hesitant, but that hand still does its best to find something easy to latch on to. “I’m in your bed?”

When he looks up there’s a piece of hair in front of his eyes, a small strand that falls above his forehead and shouldn’t be as attractive as it is. Something about the gaze, the way it’s cast up through clumped eyelashes, the pure intrigue and constant need to touch stirs a feeling unfamiliar in the bottom of George’s chest. Dream’s hot. At least he knows he has good taste.

“Hey dude,” Sapnap hums. “Fancy seeing you here.”

“Sapnap?” He turns back to George. “I’m in your bed?”

“Apparently so.” It’s too early to be angry, too early to even pretend. “Thought you would’ve snuck out during the night.”

“What?” Dream’s eyes look rounder, less sharp and more lazy when he swings an arm around. “And miss getting wake-up cuddles? I’d never.”

The hug is loose and clammy, surrounding him with untamed warmth.

“I hate you,” George mumbles against his ear, though he doesn’t do much to stop it. The foggiest in his mind will clear in ten minutes, that’s when he’ll kick the other out.

“Seriously though,” Dream grumbles. His voice is so lulling, sliding down to a lower register when he doesn’t quite know what to say. “Why am I here?”

“You probably fell asleep on me,” George explains, stiff shoulders remaining tense when Dream doesn’t yet let go. “And I didn’t want to wake you up by telling you to leave.”

If it’s possible, the other’s features curve. “What?” he smiles, genuine if George didn’t know any better. “You care?”

“No,” he scoffs, pushing a hand on the other’s shoulder to distance them again. “I just couldn’t be bothered to deal with you when you’re tired. We both know you can get a little cranky.”

“I wouldn’t call it cranky,” Dream smiles, eyes on the other pair where they watch.

The thought of having an audience to this bickering is weird, making any slump to the other’s spine stretch out straight. There’s no way to feel comfortable under this amount of analysis. George’s tone is clipped the next time he speaks.

“I would.”

A breath and then Dream’s head tips to the side. “I hate your dorm,” he breathes, blowing out his lips.

Perhaps there’s a quirk to the tone that shows it’s a joke, that he’s not actually serious with anything he says. And George will have said the same the first time he went to Dream’s room, kicking about stray shoes and opening every drawer, so he isn’t too mad, more so annoyed that the guy in front of him feels relaxed enough to speak.

“Why?”

“Because I can literally feel your roommate staring at us right now.” He raises a brow in Karl’s direction, whispering it so even if he sees, he can’t hear.

Nevertheless, George still has to tut—roll his eyes and scoff the best he can because *really?* Does Dream really have no manners? It’s bad enough that his sweat is probably all over George’s bed, drowning his sheets and making them smell just like he does, but he could at least pretend to be nice, just for a few more minutes.

So it’s no surprise that it’s only the beginnings of the day and George can only feel *hate*, or at least that’s what it has to be. Hate, in the centre of his stomach. Hate, twisting in his gut.

“Do you want to leave?” He asks, scowling undoubtedly.

By his side, Dream nods. “Yeah.”

*Fucking prick.*

“Good,” he snaps, standing up quickly. His hands are clammy when they grab the other by the front of his shirt, twisting the material between his fingers as he brings him to his feet. “Because I’m kicking you out.”

Shock makes Dream hazy. “What?”

He’s swaying on his feet, looking between George and the two people on the bed opposite like they’re the ones that are going to help. When his shoulders go up and his face scrunches with sour distaste, maybe George should feel sympathetic, but he doesn’t. Dream did this to himself, really. It’s not like he actually thought he would stay.

“Can I at least get some new clothes?” He asks, frantic, frenzied.

“No.”

“Why?” Dream frowns, up and down on his heels like he’s just *pleading* for Sapnap’s help. “I thought things were good just then.”

“Sure they were,” George shrugs. The door hits Dream’s back and then before he knows it he’s grabbing the handle, opening it up like Dream is some shitty one-night stand being kicked out in just his boxers. (He’s not. He’ll be fine.) “But then I remembered I’m still mad at you for ditching me yesterday in favour of your precious team. Go home.”

“George—”

Dream has to step back so the door doesn’t hit him on the nose.

“Ouch George,” Karl hums from the other side of the room. “That was rough.”

“Shut up.” It is still *way* too early for this. “He deserved it.”

“Sure he did,” Karl nods. The fact that still, throughout all of this he’s managed to sit with the boyfriend who most definitely isn’t allowed overnight, is shocking. What’s the harm in a little backup? Where’s that when George needs it?

“You know it’s true.”

Even if the sheets are in disarray and his pillow smells like someone else’s hair, crawling back into bed feels like the perfect option. Pulling. Dragging. Drawing. It’s all so incredibly tiring; George doesn’t know how he’s still standing straight. Later, he’ll get a text from Dream asking if he wants to come over. He’ll ignore it. Then he’ll get another with the pathetic two words ‘I’m sorry.’

A little bit of studying, an online class that he almost forgets about. Dream is one of the last things on his mind. But still, at the end of the day he’s there. Crawling in the depths of George’s brain, stringing him through every emotion with a force that’ll always leave him locked.

Fickle—that’s what it is. Up and down and up and down.

That afternoon he gets coffee (bad, strong) and a pastry and he sits by himself and just takes a day. No fake boyfriend by his side, no Karl or Sapnap or anyone else, just him. It’s pretty relieving, honestly. There, he wonders if this is even worth it, if the complex intricacies of dumping someone he was never even with will balance out the stirring that he feels.

He takes a sip, then cringes at the taste.

This is stupid.

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George likes to think he tests well.

Or at least, he usually does.

Today when he holds the paper it’s like sawdust in his hands, falling away each time he presses

down the pen and tries to leave a mark. Black, he almost wishes the ink would explode just so he'd have an excuse for the pitiful performance, a singular perfect scapegoat that'll stop him from feeling so fucking terrible now that he's out and his hands are still shaking.

Karl didn't show up. To be frank, George doesn't even know where he is, most likely falling into bed early in the morning with Sapnap by his side—a long day of skateboarding accidents and too much fun rendering them useless. Not that Karl would be that much help right now anyway. Even if he is sometimes good emotional support, testing tears were never his strong suit, definitely not when he came to college more so for the experience than the qualifications.

Either way, now George stands in the bathrooms, washing invisible ink off of his palms with enough force to rub his skin raw. There aren't tear marks on his cheeks, because George *doesn't* cry, and the insides of his eyes aren't red or blue or lined with anything smoky. He's just fine. Overwhelmed, sure, but fine.

It's probably just hunger—an insatiable clawing feeling settling in the pit of his stomach, making every motion so much harder to complete, almost like it's doing its best to grapple its way up and out of his throat. He hates feeling like this. Helpless, confused. George doesn't get helpless. Things as easy as a monthly check-up test don't grate on him like this.

But they have snacks in their mini fridge. Many, many snacks, not all of them even good. As soon as he's back up in the room and falling back down beneath the sheets he will have forgotten about all of this, and so he makes his way back to the dorms.

The routine is so familiar. His spine accommodates a regular curve as he makes his way up each step, head slightly down, shoulders slightly slumped. With more force than he probably should, he pushes open the double doors between him and happiness.

Within seconds, any remnants of a smile drop.

“Why the fuck are you outside my room?”

There, on two stupid knees pushing something incomprehensible underneath his bedroom door, is Dream. He looks sweaty, like he ran here just to do this, and with that letterman and that dirty blond hair, George wants to punch him. He's already been kicked out once, it won't be difficult to do it again.

“Oh.” Dream's ears pick up when he sees him, legs almost buckling when he pushes himself to his feet and stands straight. “It's you. Hi George.”

“Dream,” he nods, walking, slowly. “Why are you here?”

“Me?” The other asks, disgruntled with his tone. He looks down when the other finally reaches him, flexing that single bit of strength. Honestly, who had to make Dream this tall? How is that fair? “Sapnap asked me to drop something off.”

“Well you can do it another time,” George frowns, because what on earth could be so necessary that Dream couldn't just knock and hand it over. “You're seriously being weird.”

Absently, his hand goes to reach the doorknob, flinching back when the feeling isn't something he expects.

A sock. There's a sock on the door handle and George doesn't even have to think to know what it means.

“Are they serious?” He bites, huffing when he finally notices the condoms in Dream’s hand. “Jesus Christ, gross, keep that away from me.”

“That’s what I was dropping off,” Dream shrugs. He almost looks amused by the whole situation, like the fact that Karl and Sapnap are most definitely banging on the other side of the door is something to laugh at. “It’s just a condom, at least they’re being safe.”

*Safe.*

Them being safe is the least of George’s concerns right now.

“Yeah, in my fucking room,” he scowls, stepping back. All he wanted was a fucking snack, something to stop his stomach from growling when he’s already as stressed as he is. Seeing Dream’s grin makes him nauseous. Watching him bend back down to string the whole pack down under the door makes him pissed. “I’m going to the canteen, *fuck*. Tell Karl to text me once the room’s disinfected.”

Bite. Malice. He doesn’t turn to check if Dream’s got the message before spinning on his heel.

But he barely makes it to the back doors before there’s a hand on his shoulder, a light panting voice above his ear from the one person who he definitely doesn’t want to see. (Dream’s still a dick. A completely arrogant, selfish asshole who doesn’t give a shit about where he ends up at the end of the night.)

“Hey, wait up,” Dream calls when he pulls away, clearly jogging down the stairs to try and match the other’s pace.

For an athlete he seems out of breath, panting loudly while he attempts to stay by George’s side.

“What now?” He asks, clipped.

Dream is a lot of things, sure. But honestly, George never thought he’d be as stupid as to try and make small talk when there’s no one around to see. No one that matters at least. “What are you up to?”

“Nothing,” he shrugs, face rolled up in a grimace. The thought of a bad grade is already making him feel ill, he doesn’t need the other there to accompany it.

Stubborn. “Well, where are you going?”

“The canteen,” he grits out.

Repetitive. Constant. Dream’s like a little bird on the side of his shoulder, chirping and chirping and just making far too much noise for anyone to bear. However Sapnap manages to live with him is amazing. If it were George, he’s sure he would have strangled the other in his sleep already.

“Alright.” And for a second there’s a moment of beautiful silence, long enough for George to question if Dream’s finally gotten bored with the clear lack of interest and is finally walking away. But as soon as the thought crosses his mind the other’s voice is back, quieter and yet more projected, like he’s pieced it together just for George to hear. “There was a test in Comp-Sci today, how’d you do?”

Dream is lucky that George doesn’t think he could survive throwing a punch.

“I don’t want to talk about it.” If anything his pace gets faster, finally stepping off the winded

staircase and spanning out into the walkway.

The canteen is only a few metres away, easy to find. But, just to be difficult, George finds himself going the long way, hopefully just to shake the other off his trail.

“What? You always want to talk about tests,” Dream hums, like something’s taken him aback. “Your gloating is next level.”

“Well not today, Dream.” Why can’t he just get it through his head? “I don’t want to talk about it.”

Constant. Dream’s own voice must be his favourite sound. “If it makes you feel any better then you definitely did better than me,” he consoles, shittily. “I tried to study but I don’t think exams are really my thing, stressful situations and all.”

“That actually doesn’t make me feel any better.”

Of course he did better than Dream. That’s just a given. It’s not like the other has ever spent any of his time actually studying in the way George has, with books and pens and sleepless nights that give him nothing but jitters and stress. But still, somewhere in the back of that black little heart, he does feel slightly better. He didn’t *completely* tank it, just got a bad grade that’ll stick with him forever.

Nothing to be worried about.

“You’re smart, George,” Dream continues. How he managed to stop lagging behind and finally walk alongside him is unknown. “Anything you get is going to be great.”

And that’s the moment where he stills. George’s hands, perhaps of their own accord, ball up into the tightest of fists—clenched while red blossoms over the knuckles, sharp, ivory bone bursting white through the skin, just so everyone can see the tension. It’s so sudden, the way he just stops. Stops on that stupid pavement and waits for Dream to do the same. For him to turn around and just look.

“Why are you being nice to me?” He bites, malicious or not, too weak to really comprehend. “It’s weird.”

And Dream has the audacity to look shocked. Like, for as long as they’ve known each other, they both haven’t gone out of their way to make each other’s lives a living hell. Sex aside, it’s weird. Fake boyfriends aside, it’s fucking strange. George can’t blame himself for his tone.

“Oh.” Dream’s just standing still. Eyes to the floor then to George, and then the smile that follows, strained as always. “I need to talk to you about something. Figured it might be easier to have some build up.”

Something about it feels rushed, like he stumbled to pick the words out of his own brain, let alone get them out of his mouth.

But who’s George to make that call? With a simple shrug he’s back to walking, un-balling his fists before he really does get cocky and swing a hit.

“I’m still pissed,” he huffs. Hunger and anger don’t exactly make the best mix. “I don’t want to talk to you.”

And with that he’s rounding the corner to the next building, falling through the doors with Dream right behind him, hot on his heels like he can’t take the hint and just leave. Normally George

would just make a scene and let it all blow up in the other's face, with no regard for how that leaves them and their 'relationship' in the very-public eye. But today he sees something a little different. Like the once-safe space of the college canteen has successfully been infiltrated. By people who don't even room there.

"Fuck." Not today, not a chance. The moment he turns around to make his grand escape, he comes face to face with the shirt on Dream's chest, almost knocking his nose against the material before the other looks down. "Move out of the way."

One of the disadvantages of being this close, is the fact that from here George can see the every dot on the other's face when he puts on a frown, tilting his head in a completely infuriating way. "What happened? I thought you wanted to eat here or something?"

"Not anymore," he huffs. And the fact that if it were anyone else doing that head tilt then George would find it endearing manages to piss him off even more. "The entire football team *and* the cheerleading squad are here. I'll eat somewhere else."

Somewhere far off in the right, sits the rowdiest table of them all. One packed with letterman jackets and ponytail hair, little ribbons and claws and shoes that have never been scuffed in their life, just because they're too 'collectable' to let touch the outside air.

Dream's friends obviously. The ones that seem to look a bit too hard now that they've picked up on the other's voice. And for just one day George would like to continue resting in peace before he's thrown back into this world of popularity and guys that look at him with a bit too much venom to be considered normal. Tomorrow they can pick up on this fake relationship bullshit. Just not today. He can't be bothered.

"You don't have to leave just because of them, you know?" Dream tries, head straight back up like he's looking for something golden. "We'll just sit somewhere else."

If he wasn't so hungry then he would have refuted it long ago. "Where?"

Before he has the chance to pull him back, Dream is walking away, clearly ignoring the calls from the table to the side that are beckoning him over, and trying to find an empty spot just far enough away. There are plenty of spaces, George knows that. But making Dream find one for him does feel a little better than doing it for himself, especially when the other looks so dumb with his tail wagging in the air and his nose trying to sniff out the best place to sit.

"Look, here, free table," Dream grins, calling him over, not accompanied by a jab or anything sour just because they're in the presence of royalty. His precious team. Of course, appearances are everything.

Slow, he walks over, arms crossed in front of his chest when he doesn't sit down.

*Eyes.*

On the back of his neck, on the state of his t-shirt, everywhere. Eyes. Eyes. Eyes. Scanning, looking like analysing his every move will give them some insight on why Dream chose him instead of just finding a new cheerleader to try and bed. It's uncomfortable and he hates it. But he's always going to hate the way Dream performs for it far more.

A hand comes down to touch his arm, grabbing his attention with the lightness of steel fingers. Watercolour brushes it off.

"Are they watching?" He asks, teeth gritted together because he knows that's why Dream's staring

down at him like that.

In reality it shouldn't make him angry. He agreed to this after all, he could at least be a little bit more accommodating, but today he's had enough. He's already been ditched for those people. He doesn't want to have to put on a smile for them too.

"Who?" Dream asks, doing his best to seem dumb even though George knows he isn't at all.

Bitten. Snarled. "The people you're trying to prove you're in a relationship to?"

"Oh." Dream spins around, aventurine meeting that fateful table. "Yeah, they're looking,"

"Well I'm not going to kiss you or anything like that," George snaps, not once sitting down. "So you can fuck off and we can give them a performance some other time, I'm just hungry right now."

For a second, something indescribable flashes over Dream's face. "What do you mean?"

"You were, like, caressing me or something," he huffs. "I'm not in the mood."

"That's not what I— fine whatever." Dream's bite is back. His impatient tone and his nose twitch, almost familiar enough to make the other smile. "I can go ask them to mind their own business if that's what you want, but it's the fucking canteen, I can't make them disappear."

"There you are," George muses, the grin he wears so razor sharp that he's sure it slices his words in two. "I almost thought you'd gone soft on me."

Dream's expression is blank. "Shut the fuck up."

"For a second I almost thought you'd lost your bite." Teasing, cutting like a taunt. "Wouldn't that be a shame?"

"I don't even know why I bother." It's huffed, pulled up to match the irritation in the crease of Dream's brow. He glances between the table and George, not reaching out to touch him once again. "You're a dick."

"Like you're not the same," he scoffs. And just like that, when he hears the rowdiness of the hall and the thrumming of his own mind, the words come slipping right off of his tongue, almost quoted with how nearly they line up with one of the other's taunts. Poisoned. "There's a reason you're only friends with the football team, y'know? You're all meatheads that don't know how to treat someone with basic human decency if it's not for your benefit."

Dream's scowl hardens. "You don't know shit."

"Really?" Something about dragging the anger out of him makes George rise—a sick little feeling in his stomach that he knows he probably shouldn't have. "Don't I?"

And for whatever reason, Dream just stares. Aggravatingly blank like he's trying to find the insides of the other's brain and worm his way around, find the pit of anger that twists in George's chest and poke it until it bursts—bleeding red.

Hate is only one way to describe it, there are surely a thousand more that don't quite tip George's tongue, but he looks at Dream and he feels heavy, and he hears his friends and he feels like a joke. They're using each other; Karl's not even here and George is letting himself pretend to be the boyfriend.



"It's hot in here," he mumbles, mostly to himself. Dream's infuriating, awful even. He doesn't want to be seen with him for a second more. "I'm going."

Stupidly, he almost thinks that Dream is dedicated enough to the act to try and stop him, step in front of his face instead of just allowing for the other to push past in a huff. But thankfully, he's not. For the first time in what feels like forever, Dream is finally allowing him the pleasure of a few more moments alone with his own thoughts.

It can only last for so long.

"George," he hears him call when he's barely out of the door. Loud, like he owes him something, and the fucking *audacity* of it all makes George want to scream. No way does Dream really think that, other than what they have set up, George actually wants to talk to him. That's ridiculous.

"Dream," he deadpans, not slowing down when he stalks down the path.

There'll be a café or something close nearby, a sit-down place where he can finally eat and not just mull over the bad grade that he definitely got. And there he won't be surrounded by Dream's friends, the ones that give him a weird feeling whenever he meets their eyes, the ones that he doesn't get ditched for by the asshole that's still hot on his trail.

"Can we talk?" Bitter almost, like Dream's asking it just to prove a point, to send one last final jab before he laughs cruelly and announces it was all a joke. (A part of George wants him to do it and get it over with, he's not Dream's type, why the fuck would them pretending to date even work.)

"I don't know?" He scoffs, sour like his lips are lined with lime. "Do you have the time, or is there another dinner with the team to get to?"

"Are you still mad about that?" Dream asks, as though he can't believe the train of thought. Why would George still be mad, after all? It's not like he's his own person that doesn't spend all of his time just waiting for a time that's convenient to speak. Something that fits into the other's schedule.

*Football players*, he almost says aloud. Arrogant, stuck-up pricks.

"Of course I am," George retorts, still walking. "You can't just stumble into my dorm a few hours later and expect all to be forgotten."

The sound that comes from the other almost screams disbelief, an exhale that's nothing more than oblivion, and is George seriously expected to believe the mumbles when they're dropped so falsely from Dream's throat. "But I'm sorry though."

"And I don't forgive you."

The pace of his steps is quick. Hurried as he's dropping down off of the pavement and onto the empty road, jaywalking like he's not scared of the fine he'll get afterwards. *Sorry*. A word so hollow that it almost makes him choke. Of course Dream is *sorry*, the little act of politeness is the very thing he's built up over the years to keep his shield, dropping it when it comes to the distaste he feels in front of guys like George: the ones that don't bow down in front of him, build him up and up and up and fuel that ego that's never really been brought down.

Honestly, he doesn't even know if he has money in his pocket. George was more counting on the points that he had in the canteen to get a decent, semi-warm meal. But it's too late now to turn back, especially not when he can hear the footsteps finally gaining ground.

"Are you actually, like..." Dream has to jog to catch up. "...mad at me?"

It's curious in that petulant, child-like way. Deep down, Dream's just a boy, not someone mature enough for a real-life relationship, that's probably the reason why he got dumped by the same person they're putting all of this on for.

As if on instinct, George's arms cross in front of his chest. "Yes, Dream, I am."

"It was one dinner, I couldn't skip it," he tries, pleading in a shallow, curdled way.

In all honesty, George doesn't know why he's still pushing his luck. On any other good day he would have turned around and cursed him out for even thinking this pathetic 'sorry' act was worth his time, but today he's feeling a little more light. There are too many things on his mind right now for Dream to take control. He really couldn't care less.

"Well, you thought wrong."

"George can you please stop walking?"

A sharp breath, arms crossed in front of a strong chest as George stops and spins on his heel, head tilted in an expression that only reads 'unamused.'

"Hey," Dream tries, lifting his hand to give a slight wave. It's dumb on every accord and George only raises an eyebrow at the sight, assholes seem to think they can get away with everything with just a smile. It doesn't work. "It's hard to think when I'm running to catch up with you."

*No shit*, George wants to say. But he doesn't, he holds his tongue, grimacing because of how hard it is to keep down a glare. Why he's even entertaining it is a mystery, he should just turn around tell the other to fuck off and then continue on his way, but it seems he's feeling generous today and so all Dream gets is a scowl, one that's almost returned before the other remembers just where he is.

"Get on with it." Crossed arms. Raised brows. This has to be good.

"Uh— okay." Momentary stillness flashes over the other's features. "Well, I guess I just wanted to say I'm sorry. Even if you're a bit of a bitch sometimes, that's no excuse for me to ditch you. I shouldn't have done it."

Honestly, George almost laughs. "Really?" He huffs out. "That's the best you could do?"

Dream has the balls to look confused. "What? I said I'm sorry."

Blank—George's expression is flat, like sandpaper, melting when the world around them just sits in its blue-grey tone, still like it's waiting on tension to ease.

Like he always does, Dream just doubles down. "I am."

And it's the best he's going to get; so for a second George almost thinks he should accept it, say it's fine and that they can move on like nothing happened. But even if it doesn't matter right now, in the moment, he thinks that Karl's disappointed expression and the hurt *for* someone else behind his eyes, will make it. Even a fake boyfriend should be better than that. But it's Dream after all, who expects someone who's been babied all their life to even consider the weight of their words.

"You're unbelievable," George bites. Bites, because his teeth are sharp enough to cut, dig into skin and rip out the very chunk he wants. Forever piercing. "There's no way you seriously think that was good enough."

“What do you mean?”

“Well for starters, don’t call someone a bitch in your apology.”

Sandy blond hair falls to one side, swept away by stone carved fingers. “But you *are* a bitch?”

True. He doesn’t have to say it though.

“Not the point,” George dismisses, waving his hand in the air.

As annoying as Dream is, he has to admit that the afternoon light is hitting him well, shadowing his face in the perfect way. There’s a chance that the next few words that leave the other’s lips he doesn’t quite hear properly, but that’s not his fault. It’s just how they are. If George was the one in the wrong then he’s sure that Dream would be thinking the same. Sex—the almighty fixer.

His next exhale is quick.

“Well, how can I prove it to you?” Dream’s still asking, still so dick-like in inflection. It’s like no matter what he does, some of that still has to shine through, ruin the words he’s saying as though they weren’t already so fragile in their meaning. “I don’t want you to be like, actually mad.”

And as hollow as it is, it’s still weird. George has said it once and he’ll say it again. They aren’t made to be nice to each other, whatever act Dream’s putting on should be saved for someone else.

“What the fuck is *this*?” He can’t help asking, gesturing to Dream like he’s some strange entity that’s been placed on this earth just to fuck with him.

The guy he knows would be antagonising him for his stubbornness, not trying to apologise even more just to accommodate. It’s weird, in every possible way, and George wants nothing more than an unbridled insult just so he can determine whether he’s really still set in reality.

But it’s getting boring and Dream’s weird, half-pissed off, half-trying expression certainly isn’t making it better. So his hands come back down by his sides and his hair gets pushed away because its relentless strands just don’t want to stay out of his face, and he breathes—sudden, careful—George breathes.

“Why are you even talking?” He asks, feeling that pressure building up inside his chest. It’s so worth it to see the frustration on Dream’s face, cherry red while he blooms like a tomato. “It’s not fixing anything.”

Resentful. “If you let me fucking speak then it might.”

“Okay,” George muses. “How about instead, we just go have sex in the back of your truck? That’d probably make me feel a lot better.”

And he knows why he says it because really, after everything, meaningless, fast-paced sex is the only thing that’s going to get his spirits high enough to stay. He watches every emotion as it flickers over Dream’s face, pink then blue then ghost, ghost white.

“I don’t know,” complexity says, balanced like he hasn’t really thought it through. “Do you want to fuck?”

George’s hand takes the sleeve of Dream’s jacket.

That’s the only way they can stand each other.

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They don't end up fucking.

In fact, it seems as though as soon as Dream's got George in the van, that's the very last of his thoughts. And it would be a lie for George to say he isn't at least a bit hurt, because really? Dream doesn't want to have sex with him anymore, that's just the cherry on top of an already bad day. Because Dream is *always* ready for sex. Whether it's after a long day of practice or an excuse to finally take a shower when he wasn't feeling like it yet. And while George isn't as bad, he's still definitely bad. That's the whole reason they came up with this stupid routine in the first place anyway, to blow off some over fuzzing steam.

So the fact that now, on an empty stomach and with a definitely bad grade under his belt, George is being told he doesn't need to get in the backseat and strip off, is a little more than aggravating.

"What the fuck is going on?" He ends up snapping, hands falling down to his side in frustration. Sitting in the front seat like Dream's perfect boyfriend-bitch is starting to get on his nerves, turning him a burning red of whirlwind frustration. Right now he has better things on his mind.

Helpful. He could be in the library, or the research centre, or hounding their professor through email about the extra things he needs to brush up on. The dejection is nothing more than a mellowed out storm. Even Dream's pretty little face is making him want to scream.

"What do you mean?"

But no, instead he's fully clothed and resting right next to the other, glaring through the outside mirror.

"Do I smell or something? Is that the issue?"

"Well yeah, you always do," Dream attempts to joke, half-serious, half-not, always in that stupid fucking tone. "But that's never put me off before, I'm not exactly sniffing your skin when I'm fucking you."

"Yeah you're too busy crying like a bitch to get your senses to work," he hums.

When the heat comes it always goes one or two ways, more often than not leaving George flat on his back, trembling with his legs in vice grip. Glimmering blistering want will line each touch and he'll snap and scrape and drag his nails like knives along the other's back. Never really seeing it in the morning, only hearing about the pain the next time that sort of night rolls around.

That's their normal—the way their fates will always twist.

But sometimes, rarely, he gets to see Dream beg.

The tears that he swears never actually fall, the pleading as his hips are held down and the other ignores his own shaking just to sit up straight and not allow him more. The remark on the tip of Dream's tongue is surely as bitter and venomous as they come; George cuts him off with his own fatal blow.

"Why aren't we having sex right now?"

It's almost like Dream finds it funny. "Because I wanted to talk," he shrugs, leaning against the closed, caved door. "Is that so hard to believe?"

Incredulous. "Yes."

"No it's not," Dream stretches, smiling that lazy probing smile. His hands come to rest on his lap, green with lining veins and blossomed marble. "Don't be dumb."

"You've, like, kidnapped me." He doesn't even want to look him in the eye, the proximity too much to bear. "I was promised sex, not a fucking conversation."

Sometimes, George doesn't think Dream is aware that he's being an asshole, too pampered up to care and too pretentious to understand why. There are times where he does it on purpose, sure, doing his best to get on the other's nerves because that's the way the world will always work. Turning. Aching. Stuttering. But that's not what this is. This is exasperation coiling up with a shimmer, dragging on his features when those lips twist back into a frown.

"If you want to leave that badly then you can go, I'm not stopping you."

And George should take the bait. He has the patience of a saint, it always seems. As his own hands sit on the planes of his thighs and that curl of hair that falls above his brows starts to settle, there's no doubt that some part of him itches to reach towards the door.

He could leave. Get the meal he wants and never have to think of this day again.

Still, another part, the sicker part, wants to know what the other has to say.

Stupidity—that's the thing that will always line his actions. "Whatever. Fine—okay," he breathes, eyes everywhere but right in front. "So if you want to talk then talk." Arms in the air, waving hands. Bitter, squirming discomfort. "Why'd you actually ditch me? I mean, Jason said it himself, Sappnap brings Karl all the time, there's no way you just conveniently forgot that fact."

If Dream wants to correct the name then he doesn't, pursing his lips as though his vocal cords won't work. "You didn't want to go."

Finally, he lets it go. "Not when I was already your last thought."

"No, George," Dream says. Light eyebrows are pushed together, the raking of blond hair being pulled apart by the second, like stress is making them knot. "You didn't want to go at all. You and the team wouldn't have gotten along."

*Unbelievable.* "You don't know that." He did. It's not like George would have made an effort to be nice.

"Yes I do," Dream says again, louder this time, more intent. And he's nervous for whatever reason, twitchy like George isn't the only one that'll hear these words. Everything about it just feels off: the way he sinks back in his seat and bites his own lip, the way he huffs before letting himself ramble with a spike. "Look I— I didn't tell you this, okay? You didn't hear it from me, but the team— they're like, not nice people."

Quiet. The penny drops.

Disbelief is blatant. "I already knew that," he drones, because seriously? He's pretty sure he said it straight to the other's face. Assholes as clear as day, the type of people he wouldn't be caught dead with just because they're as shallow as they seem.

When he turns to Dream the other doesn't seem as amused, flinching away from his own skin like the barrier even hurts.

"No, you didn't," he mutters, head leaning back against his seat. "They're just— so much worse than whatever you're imagining, so, so much worse. Like— I didn't even know we were going to dinner until they told me. And when I did, I couldn't get out of it, they would *never* let me live that down."

Even with the way Dream's eyes squeeze shut, something akin to fear in those features, George doesn't think he can feel bad. "You're like the star player, I think they would."

"Everyone's replaceable," Dream shrugs, like a mantra with the way it slips from his tongue. "They're already on my ass about everything and you did not want to go through a night full of that."

Hollow, the light behind George's eyes has to be dull. There's no way Dream is seriously trying to sell him this bullshit, does he really look that stupid?

Only a few nights ago, the team was the best thing on the planet. The ones he'd do anything for, defend until the ends of the earth. If anything, George was the one that wasn't tolerable, and yet now, under a clear blue sky, a roof that's sinking lower and doors that only ever close in, he's being told the opposite. Fruitless words, it's not as though they hold any meaning.

"Karl goes; he has fun." George says it with a glare. He's not getting caught out this easily, not a chance.

But Dream has an answer for everything. "No, he doesn't," he breathes. Honesty is raw, honesty is tough, it's so jarring to see the yellow tones drip from the other's mouth, those pink locked lips pressing together before the glance is shot in the other's direction. "I swear to god if you tell him that I said this then I will kill you, understand?"

George can only roll his eyes. Honesty doesn't scare him. "Whatever."

It does, however, scare Dream. "*George.*"

That look is so foreign. Like wide eyes and reluctance all bundled up into one. If George didn't know any better then he'd say the other was scared, but he does. This is him—the guy he shares the air with doesn't care enough for formalities. It's not as though any of this is real.

So he sighs, what's the harm? Promises are meaningless in their words. "Fine."

For a second, Dream just sits, mulling over each sound like he has to string the sentence together before he says it. "Look, Karl— Karl does not enjoy those dinners," he starts, only earning a shake of the head. Honestly, George half wants to shove him for the gall of it. As if. Karl *raves* about those dinners, the sea of sweat and joy and bright, bright egos. There's no way he doesn't actually enjoy them. Still, Dream sees his expression and cuts him off with a raised palm. *Wait. Give him a second to speak.* "It's not a secret that the team gives him hell and— and Sapnap tries to defend him but he's not always there, and they barely listen to me. It couldn't be less fun, Karl just goes because Sapnap's got to spend his time with them, and he's the only good part. They just— they're all assholes, and they can swear they're not homophobic all they like but it doesn't feel that way."

Quiet.

Dream takes a breath once he's done with the last word.

“What do you mean?” George asks slowly, carefully. Each gear tick in his head feels like a needle. “What do you mean ‘gives him hell?’”

It’s hard to comprehend. Like the world folding in on itself while the other just sits and speaks. He should have gone when he had the chance, so he wouldn’t be here almost believing the words that leave *Dream* of all people’s lips. But he is and the worst part must be, that for the first time in forever, Dream doesn’t look like he’s lying.

“Teasing,” he shrugs. “Jokes that definitely aren’t jokes.”

“And Karl notices it?” George has to ask, still slumped back like he’s trying to disappear. He has never heard this before, there’s no way that the other wouldn’t have said. “You’re saying he doesn’t have fun, but are you sure he actually cares?”

“Of course he cares,” Dream stresses. Hesitant, his hand comes back to comb through his hair, only ever sitting by his scalp. “He looks like he’s on the verge of tears half the time, that’s caring.”

The earth is covered in water. Shallow, blue, water. Right now George feels as though he’s only just above the tide, wading, barely managing to keep his head away from the crash as his arms are arms coiled with weeds and growth and the things that are trying to drag him under.

That’s not true, it can’t be.

Bruises must be settling under his skin where he digs his fingers into his skin. In the morning they’ll boil and his flesh will peel off too. Angry to the touch. Icy when he feels the sink.

“That’s— that’s not true,” he chokes, *chokes*, why is he believing Dream now? Why does the other have to look like he’s actually telling the truth? Everything just feels like death. “Karl has never mentioned that.”

“You really think he’s going to dump his problems on you?” Dream asks, no vocal crack or disintegrating tone. “You said it yourself, he’s worried.”

And that’s the moment where everything crumbles.

Karl’s never sad, or angry, or anything other than fretful. He can be disappointed, of course he can, he’s only ever been human, but George doesn’t think he’s ever seen anything like hate press against the other’s chest. It’s stifling, held up by string at the back of his throat. And the stinging behind his eyes is shaken away in seconds when he thinks of the guy in front of him.

George doesn’t cry. And if he did, Dream certainly wouldn’t be one to see it.

“So what?” He bites, looking up through blinding hate. “Your friends suck and now you’re saying that’s why I can’t meet them?”

A frown is overwhelming. “You’re not taking me seriously.”

“How could I?” George practically spits. This is too much to bear, too much to even think about. “That’s *your* friend group, Dream. *You* chose them. You’re one of them. Of course they’re all assholes too.”

Insults, dark and sticking to the underside of his tongue when he lets them loose. This is the only thing that’ll make him feel better right now—seeing the frustration on the other’s face before it draws back and away. Dream’s just trying to make himself look better, why would he tell George something like that when he’s never been anything other than shallow?

Out of character.

The honesty almost feels like a ploy.

“You’re mean to people too,” Dream retorts. Blond. Blond. Blond. That’s the only thing George can really think, because any time he delves too far it starts to sting and the surface level is comfortable enough. He doesn’t need to know Dream, he doesn’t think he likes what he already does.

“So what?” He scoffs, turning away. “I’m mean to the people that are already mean to me, at least I don’t ditch the ones that are actively doing me a favour just to surround myself with people that stroke my ego.”

A low blow, sure, but it’s true. George *is* doing him a favour here, all he gets out of it is even more good sex and a chance to make the only friend he has happy.

In a moment of collection, Dream sits back up, straight spine, raised jaw. If warmth were to cradle his cheekbones then it would lift them up, paint them pink like confusion only knows how to blush. “What’s that supposed to mean? Stroking my ego?”

The seat where he sits feels smaller, uncomfortable no matter how much he moves. *It can’t be true. It can’t be true. It can’t be true.*

He hums. “You know they do.”

“That’s just, like, how the team is.” Dream’s shaking his head, fingers thrumming against the dashboard like that’s how he’ll move the exasperation. “We hype each other up, defend each other from things.”

“And you enjoy it.” The point’s only proven. Even if all of that wasn’t made up, Dream’s still just as bad. “You like it when people worship you.”

“Fuck off, I–”

He doesn’t even listen, only shifting to face the window. “Don’t say anything.”

Silence. The humming of wind when the door stays shut.

They’re just in the car park, settled amongst the other car’s that stay empty of their passengers. It’s almost odd to see daylight like this, up and out through that bleak front window, all while sitting next to the other and only hearing featherlight breath.

Hate is like a chokehold, squeezing out each thought.

There’s a second where he thinks that Dream will just ignore his call and continue, push on with that point like it’ll really make a difference. But he doesn’t. Thankfully, he keeps his mind to himself and stays. Boiling over the pot is dread, spitting out heat and making his skin that much hotter. George thinks he never wants to know this tension, because it must be bad if he’s considering believing a plaguing word that Dream says.

It’s thorns and it’s prickly, and he hates every single moment.

If it was true he would have noticed it, wouldn’t he? He has to have.

Stolen, dark eyes flicker to the other side of the car, Dream just sitting forward like he’s waiting



for permission to speak. It's wrong and George should have left a long time ago because it's clear right now that he's not getting his sex, and on top of that the answers that he wanted definitely aren't right either. But Dream looks mad, not venomous or poisoned, but so deep in thought that there's no way to drag him out of it.

And George has never seen him like this.

Cocky. Arrogant. That's how Dream gets; this is almost a different person.

Grumbling—George's stomach is loud.

"I'm hungry," he says before he can stop himself.

It's almost worth it to watch the way Dream's shoulders unstiffen. "Yeah?"

His head tilts to the side, nose twitching up. "Yeah."

"Okay, let's go get dinner."

Carefully, he watches the other sit up straight, tipping his head back and forth like he's trying to roll the knots. Guilt is such an awful feeling, and yet somehow it's become interwoven with every other one that's sinking, churning, in the bottom of his stomach—a presence that lingers despite the tightening of the air. Dream's still a dick. George has no doubts about that.

But right now he needs a distraction, and if spending time with the one guy on this earth that he hates more than anything, will take his mind off of the friend he's being told he only half knows, then he'll do it. Stupidly, he'll look at the other when he speaks.

"Could be a good change of pace, right?" Dream's jacket bags when he lifts an arm.

The little bits of attraction that pool in the depths of George's mind will never really be forgotten, so in response, he drags up bitterness. "You're not going to ditch me this time?"

"I'm still sorry for that," Dream tries, most likely feeling the eyes on the side of his neck when he groans and says it again. "I am."

"Still, us?" George scoffs. For whatever reason he's hanging on to the last of his dignity. "Get dinner?"

"Yeah, I'm hungry too? So do you want to go and get food with me?"

The seatbelt is smooth when he toys at the edge, snug, holding the only actual form of protection that Dream keeps in this god forsaken car. The moment that he checks, George isn't too surprised. He already half-knew that there was nothing in his pockets, so really the fact that he's sitting here without a wallet doesn't prove to be a shock at all.

A sigh—breathless. So much for calming down.

Relentless, that twist of hunger comes back to bite through his tone. "I don't have any money."

But Dream just shrugs. "I didn't ask if you had any money."

Somehow, that really doesn't make George feel better. "What?"

"I asked if you wanted dinner," Dream reiterates, over and over, looking at George like he's dumb. "Not if you had the money for it."

“It’s the same question.” It’s like there’s something not quite clicking, there in the back of Dream’s head, and it’s annoying, of course. Because obviously George knows that Dream definitely doesn’t have that issue—not when his parents have paid for every fucking thing that he owns.

Obviously, he can’t help but cross his arms, silently inching back in his seat as the other continues to stare.

And after the moment where it’s lasted for too long, Dream’s jaw finally drops, metal hands coming down to clang against the wheel. “Jesus, I’m trying to say I’ll pay for you.”

George’s eyes can only widen. “Really?”

Dream’s barely ever offered to wipe him down after fucking his face, only ever offered a glass of water when his legs are too shaky to hold himself up. The fact that right now he’s even thinking about buying them *both* a warm meal feels like a hallucination. George has to pinch himself to see if it’s real.

“Yeah,” he mumbles. And the car twists on, humming into gear when the key starts to turn. “Suck my dick and you can get dessert too.”

That part actually sounds appealing. “You promise.”

“Of course.” The truck sputters into reverse. “Who could say no to those lips?”

And so they drive. Stupidly, like the conversation they just had is behind them for good, they drive. Dream seems to know the town a whole lot better than George does, their campus spanning the entirety of his otherworldly knowledge, so he tries not to make too many backseat comments even if it’s the only thing he wants to do.

The road is as broad as he remembers it. The trees just as green and the grass just as yellow. If he wasn’t as hungry then he’d be making far more intelligent quips, but at the rate he’s going hunger is close to bordering on nausea and so he thanks for the fact that he’s still alive.

“Search for the closest places,” Dream says at one point, gesturing for the other to do something useful.

With a slow, calculated glance, George reaches back down into his pockets, patting down his jeans like he’ll find something different from the last time he looked. Unsurprisingly though, he doesn’t, and so he ends up circling back with irritation on high cheeks.

“I don’t—” He checks again. How is he meant to know if the room is clear if Karl can’t even text him? “Fuck, I don’t have my phone on me.”

“How do you not have anything?” Dream finally asks, both eyes on the road.

A shrug. Of course, Dream wouldn’t know. “We weren’t allowed to bring it for the test,” he explains, as straightforward as he can.

There’s a noise of affection, tacky and condescending. “You’re cute when you stick to the rules,” Dream awes. “Take mine, it’s in my jacket pocket.”

As if to accentuate his point, he lifts an elbow, nodding his head to the pocket on the left. If he wasn’t so hungry then George would have told him to go fuck himself, but he bites his tongue and leans over, arm brushing against the other’s stomach when he searches for his phone.

It's a quick job, in and out, leaving George to prop himself up with an unsteady arm while he taps the on button and waits.

"Password?" He drones, not really expecting to get it.

But Dream answers almost immediately. "Zero. Two. One. Four."

It takes a moment for the numbers to compute.

"Valentine's day?" George asks, barely biting back a laugh.

"My cat's birthday," Dream corrects. "As if I'd make that stupid holiday my password."

Curiosity has to peak, the thin line of George's lips turning down when he mulls over the thought. He's never seen a cat in Dream's house. He *loves* cats.

"Don't lie," he mutters. "You don't have a cat."

"I do at home." The car turns to the side, falling down the long, stretched road. This casual conversation doesn't come easy off Dream's tongue, like he's assessing if George should know these details before he lets them loose. "No way I'm bringing her to a house full of college football players, she deserves better than that. My mom's got her."

"Cool," George responds quietly. He's got Dream's phone open in his hands, scrolling through all the names he can in the hopes of finding somewhere to eat. "I didn't know that."

"Of course you didn't." It's almost scoffed. "We don't talk."

That, George chooses to ignore. "There's a place like half a mile away, I'll tell you when to take a right."

"Okay." Hands on the wheel, one drifting to flick the radio on. "Can I have my phone back?"

Loosely, George goes to pass it over.

"In my pocket," Dream says to halt him.

Tomorrow George is going to murder him. He isn't sure how, maybe he'll squeeze the breath out of his lips, shake him hard enough for that pretty little head to just *pop*, but he's going to do it. He's going to see mulberry paint it's undying streak over the bridge of Dream's nose, and mercilessly, he won't let himself stop.

"Fuck you," he grumbles meanly, reaching back over to slip the phone back in the pocket closest to him. And the moment that he sees Dream open his mouth to try and get him to change it back into the one where it came, he glares. There's no way he's doing that. He's not the other's bitch.

So he keeps his hands to himself and doesn't choke the other out, and at the same time presses his knees to the side of the car furthest from the other.

The air-con dips a little low and any shake that's in his arms he ignores, because there's no way he's saying that, especially not when he already knows how warm Dream's letterman can be. Temptation—as unforgiving as they come. He ought to slap himself for even thinking it. *What the fuck?* He doesn't want to wear Dream's disgusting letterman again.

The moment that he sees the sign for where they're eating, he sighs, relief coming in hot and heavy. It's like tension being snapped, a string in the back of his neck that's cut the second he

allows himself to slump. No more guilt, no more flames, just good fucking food.

Aventurine eyes are on him as soon as the truck is turning into the drive-thru, the smallest of smiles painting Dream's lips like victory. All of it is dumb, so George doesn't return the gesture, just craning his neck to look at the menu then inhaling when he can't quite read the words.

"What do you want?" Dream asks, rolling his window down.

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"That's what I said, isn't it?"

"Okay," Dream huffs. Out of the corner of his eye, George can see he's smiling, leaning out of the window and scanning the menu with his hand still firmly trained on the wheel. "Hello?"

The buzzer hums.

"Can I get two double cheeseburgers, a large fry, a water and—" He looks to George. "A vanilla milkshake?"

*Good choice*

Next time the buzzer hums, Dream is moving forward.

"How'd you know I wanted a milkshake?" George has to ask.

"I have to know my *boyfriend's* drink of choice." It's said with a shrug, all while Dream does his best to bring back the smugness that can be plastered mockingly on his cheeks. "I'm attentive, aren't I, honey?"

"Fuck off."

The line is short and so they're only waiting for a few minutes, pulling up to the window while expert fingers tap lightly on a button. There's only so much George can say. Right now, even when 'cocky' is the very thing that Dream wants to show, he doesn't look it. At the back of his mind, George thinks he may always hear daunting words behind that shallow water

Because the more he thinks about it, whatever can make *Dream* nervous, must be worse than he originally thought.

Hunger calls again and George's head twists to the side so he can glance out of the other's window. And his timing is perfect it seems, because the moment he does so the window slides up, a blonde in a baseball cap dipping out to try and speak.

"Cash or credit?" She asks, eyes, eyes, eyes.

That perfect blue makes him lean back, almost blinded with the contact. Dream, however, just grins. "Credit." It's that drawling awful tone that George hates—the one that makes him roll his eyes because seriously? He's right there. He's not laying witness to Dream's pathetic attempt at flirting.

He's ready to just rip the other's hair out if he doesn't get on with it—irritation bubbling heavy in his throat. But then a hand comes down to rest on his thigh and his attention is being caught once again, legs pulled apart and then together while Dream sends him a quizzical look on the search for

his wallet.

The touch is shaken off.

They're not performing for a drive-thru worker, it's not like they're *actually* dating.

"Here you go." The card machine goes but the lingering on the bag as it's passed over doesn't. The worker half out the window and a piece of torn paper placed haphazardly over the bag.

There's no word to describe it other than 'eye-fucking,' he's not a fucking idiot, he knows what's going on. When blue rakes over a stupid letterman jacket and deft fingers move to swoop away dirty blond hair, it's obvious. Green lining that smile, a danger in eyes that only know how to roam.

"Thanks," Dream says eventually, taking the bag and passing it over to George's side. He holds his card in his hand and doesn't look at where he places it on the other, leaving George to grapple with the drinks and fold over the top of the bag to stop anything from spilling. "Have a nice day."

"You too," they call, and George thinks he sees red.

The feeling in his stomach is so incredibly confusing, heated in a way that makes his stomach twist ever so slightly even when he drags down the cupholder to place the two cups. The piece of paper is a number, he figures out pretty easily, but before he can really think of what it means he's stuffing it down the pocket of the door. A rash decision, but one he sticks to.

His stomach rumbles again.

It's not weird to think that Dream would entertain those types of things, and George has no right to interject. So there's no need to remind himself that they aren't actually together when every tumbling in his chest is easy to ignore. Nagging thoughts. Boiling mind. He picks up his drink, all the while pretending that his eyes don't flicker to where Dream's hand clenches around the steering wheel, or the half-smile on his face the moment that they pull away.

The truck stutters and starts and the road ahead is flat, venturing off to the busier part of town before dragging to the side. Reluctance sits mellow in his veins, flaring when those fingers tap the top of the wheel once again.

"Find somewhere to park," he grumbles, leaning back in his seat.

The straw to the milkshake finds its way between pink, blushed lips, resting between his teeth as George takes a sip. It's good, though right now it's not exactly what he wants. Because even the thought itself is embarrassing, and he'll never *ever* say it out loud, George does enjoy giving head (even if Dream is a renowned hair pusher and definitely doesn't warn him before reaching the edge).

"You really want to eat in the van?" The other asks, after one meticulous second of waiting.

Whatever song that's playing is twisting in the blue-white air. It's frustration that lines George's scoff. He's *horny*, and he's hungry, and Dream's still acting like an idiot.

"What?" Head back, lolling against the seat. "Obviously, but I meant so I could suck your dick."

"Don't be stupid," Dream breathes, shaking his head with his eyes on the road. "You're obviously not sucking my dick right now."

"Why not? I thought that was the deal."

“I was joking, idiot,” Dream snips, scraping the edge of maliciousness. “You don’t have to do anything.”

That is *not* Dream. Dream, who’s tried to fuck him barely outside of the locker room doors, Dream whose truck has been used so many times it probably has a dent in the shape of George’s body at the back. The guy George knows would not be turning down sex even after they’ve worked their shit out. He’s so horny it’s normally like he’s trying to get their clothes off before the other can speak.

The milkshake goes down from between his lips, a pinch in his brow as irritation floods his tongue. “What if I want to?”

But Dream just ignores the call. “Eat your food,” he says, hand stumbling out to reach into the bag and pick out a fry. “For once we’re just going to hang out without fucking.”

And if George has anything else to say then he keeps it to himself. Whatever. Dream will get bored of this soon enough.

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George doesn’t like this version of Dream.

He laughs really loud and is way too polite to the point that it’s stifling and he tries to take George’s fries because, quote “he paid for them.” And for some reason, George can’t bring himself to make him stop. He doesn’t say a thing about how nauseating it is whenever Dream speaks with his mouth full, and he doesn’t say a word about the way he feels each time he touches his leg after making a joke.

It’s fucking weird.

The twisting in his stomach, the scowl on his face that slips each time he forgets to hold it up for as long as he can.

Everything that Dream does gets on George’s nerves. He doesn’t like him, doesn’t like him at all. But at the same time there’s something off about it, something he can’t quite put his finger on, because Dream asks a lot of questions, more than he probably should. He asks about George’s family and his friends outside of the dorm, and when he does so he smiles.

Nothing tight lipped or snide, because those feelings must be hidden behind that skin.

Enough so, that if George wasn’t aware of who he’s speaking to then he’d almost think Dream cared.

But he doesn’t, of course. Everything will always just be an act, a thing brought up by pretty boys that have only ever been told they’re the best. Because it’s not like Dream is like this when it matters, around his friends, or his classmates, the people he actually lives with and sees twenty-four hours a day. Now, here, with George, it’s almost like he’s a different person.

He just takes what he can get.

“These fries suck,” George moans. He’s already eaten half of them of course, as well as demolishing his burger and only sitting with a quarter of a milkshake, but there’s definitely room

for complaint. For starters, they're going cold, a little bit soggy and don't crisp in the way he wants them to beneath his teeth. That doesn't stop him from taking two at a time though, legs crossed and dirtying Dream's already unclean seats as he holds them in his lap.

"They're good enough," Dream shrugs, reaching over to grab another.

The amount of times he's told George to move his feet is unfathomable, but the other hasn't really paid it that much mind. Dream's getting a new car soon anyway—his birthday treat, according to his mom. Maybe, finally, he'll have some actual cushioning when he's in the backseat, or at least a place to fuck without being scared the whole thing will collapse.

"I've had better," he shrugs.

Being hungry and angry is never a good mix. A lot of the time George thinks that's just his problem, living on a student's diet with enough academic responsibilities is surely going to be his downfall. So now that his stomach is full and he's calmed down a bit from the impending doom of a poor mark, he's gotten a little more agreeable.

Of course, he's nothing if not self-aware.

"I've made better," Dream says offhandedly, chewing with his eyes closed in thought.

The smaller details that slip seem to catch them both by surprise, humanity crawling back to them in clawed, breathless strokes. George has the mind to give him half a glance before just glaring, lifting an eyebrow with complete disbelief, "No way you can cook."

"It's just fries, George." Mocking in the tone. "Not exactly rocket science."

But instead of being offended, he just shrugs out a laugh—not a proper laugh of course but a breath, something that reeks amusement when amber catches light. "More than I can do."

"Not a big chef?"

"The most I do is use the microwave in the canteen."

"Well, come over one day and I can teach you?" Dream offers easily. There's barely even hesitance before he says it, like a different person, one that doesn't hate George and all his guts, is really extending out a hand. "Might be hard though, you look like you can barely hold a knife."

"Fuck off—seriously? Like, what?" Shock is only outweighed by scorn. "You'll teach me how to cook?"

"If you want." A head on the top of the seat, turning towards him with that charm encrusted smile. "Could be fun. If I can get over how annoying you are."

"I'd have to get over how much of a dick you are first."

"Oh my god, shut up," Dream groans, though the smile never dips. "We were having a moment."

"You call that a moment," George mocks within seconds. Dream's just being dumb, no way they were having anything even *close* to a moment. "No wonder you have to pretend someone would date you."

"I'm doing it out of convenience." A joke and then not. "You're just doing it so you can pretend you have a life."

“I hate you.”

“Eat the fries.”

This whole thing is so weird, two more fries go up to his lips when he mulls it over.

Maybe the air isn't heavy and his hands don't feel like bricks falling through the floor, but there's still something so wrong about it, acidic when it burns his insides out. Dream's nice, in his weird, snarky kind of way. Nice one second then hating him the next, and this will just be one of those days that they forget about, because they needed to talk and George was already in a mood. But up until the moment he's kicked out he'll think about it.

Why he's here hanging out with Dream when he could have left long ago.

In all honesty, George doesn't think he's ever properly 'hung out' with Dream, outside of the sex and the arguments and their blinding sort of routine. Everything about it feels odd in a way. Because right now, in this dumb empty parking lot, in a van that's barely comfortable and a seat that's knocking against his knees, they aren't in front of anyone.

There's no Karl to impress. No ex to prove a point to.

Out of the corner of his eye, George watches Dream take a sip out of his water and decides that he really does detest him. Pink lips, parted cranberry. The first time they hooked up was simply right place, right time; sweaty skin and a late night where the library was almost on the close. Books, George thinks, have never been Dream's forte, or at least not the non-fiction ones, because if the underneath of his bed has anything to say about it, then he's wrong. But there he was scanning ones George doesn't even think he checked out, panting after football practice, muttering like he had something to prove.

He knows what happened. He knows. He knows. He knows.

But he chooses not to reminisce about the words behind a bookshelf, or the way Dream's hand felt interlocking with his own. It's all in the past now, whatever happened will always just be a blur.

“Shit.” The car kicks back on. “Is that the time?”

George barely has a chance to drag himself out of his thoughts before Dream's speaking again.

“I've got to go to practice.”

Emotionless, the other just nods. “Oh, okay.”

“Where should I drop you off?” Dream asks, pulling down his seatbelt while he's already backing out. His eyes are everywhere and his hands so far apart on the wheel, stress is only one way to describe it. Nerves line the tremors in every shake. “Or you could stay if you want, we could finish this up later. I could teach you to cook?”

Quick. Quick. Quick.

Like little last thoughts, the wing mirror is the only thing catching his attention.

“Not today,” George refuses, bringing his legs back down so he's safe. “I don't feel like waiting in the cold again.”

“You could take my jacket?”



“No, Dream.” Firmer this time. His fries are cold and that mood is starting to dip. *Of course they can’t just hang out, Dream’s got better things to do, a team to think of.* “Take me to the dorms.”

They drive most of the way in silence. “Alright.”

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George doesn’t know when it got this dark. Supposedly, that comes with autumn. Still, it feels as though it’s the death of half his day. He’s halfway out of the car door when he hears it, sleeves too short for this oncoming storm, but either way he stops when the door is closed and allows himself to look back. Dream is sitting there. He hates his guts.

“Hey, George.”

The voice is gentler, like it only wants to land on his ears and not drag. When he spins on his heel he only manages a singular raised brow, Dream is going to practice. This has changed nothing.

“I just wanted to say sorry again.” But the world has this funny little way of surprising him. It’s honest sometimes, in a way he can’t understand. “About– about ditching you. It was pretty awful of me, and I regret it, and I should never have left you like that. I’m sorry.”

It’s not often that he’s lost for words. “Oh.”

Dream has a smile that bleeds charm and his teeth are sharper than a needle’s point. He’s awful and George hates him and yet he’s apologising and everything seems to stop.

“Yeah.” Light fingers tap against that wheel. “I’ll be going now.”

And he doesn’t know what possesses him, what otherworldly force that grabs against his arms and shoots him forward, but before he knows it his hand is coming up, and that one awful guy is stopping before him.

“Wait– Dream.”

A stuttering in the wheels. “Yeah?”

There’s no one out right now, clubs up and running, essays due in days. Right now, George feels like the only person on the planet, fragile when he lets his hate turn into ice.

“Thank you,” he mutters, prideful until the end. “For apologising.”

A narrow stare. He feels his cheeks burn—humiliation, no doubt.

“Don’t look at me like that.”

But instead of ridicule, something else comes. Something that makes his stomach dip once more, fretful, overpowering discomfort must be the only reason.

“You just said thank you,” Dream smiles. An actual smile. An actual giddy, mind-twisting smile.

“Shut up,” he bites immediately. Protection. Those walls come back up. “You’re never going to hear it again.”

“You— George— just said thank you to me.”

A scowl is hanging onto his features, ever present even when he turns around to stalk back into his building. “Go to practice.”

“I can’t believe this.” Dream’s still talking.

The only thing that brings him comfort is the sound of the door slamming closed behind him.

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The moment George gets back to the dorm he wants to collapse.

“Finally.” Karl’s sitting cross-legged on his bed, bundled up in a hoodie and a smile. “You’re back, I thought you’d be here earlier.”

It doesn’t reek of sex anymore (thankfully), and George doesn’t even want to know what the other did to finally get rid of that smell, but at least he’s gone. That’s the thing that means his tone doesn’t hold as much bite when he flops down, that’s why his lips are far sweeter and his mind sits pretty in the clouds.

“I tried,” he mumbles, muffled into the feathers of his pillow. “But someone was busy in here.”

Warmth is the blanket that he pulls up over him, the way he kicks off his shoes and lets his outside clothes touch the bed, even if it kills him to do so.

“You saw the sock?” Karl’s tone is cautious. But George has had too much of a ride to really poke, there’s already too much he’s thinking of, biting out an argument because the other doesn’t know the appropriate time to fuck, isn’t a priority.

“Sadly,” he mumbles. And his head falls away from the pillow, turning to the side so he can see the other side of the room. It’s all bleak, grey and brightened by their yellow lights, and maybe it’s just because he’s feeling mellow, but he swears there’s something different about the other’s face—a tug down, a strand of misplaced hair. “You okay?”

It shouldn’t hurt to see how surprised Karl looks by the question. “Yeah, Sap went to practice. His phone was blowing up. It’s like football is the only thing he’s allowed to breathe.”

All of it’s joking, in a tone that’s breathy and light, but at the end of each word dark eyes hollow out in fragility. It’s like the world is falling flat.

“They’re on his ass?” George asks, *don’t push, don’t push, don’t push.*

That swirling in his mind is only getting louder, thrumming against his every thought.

“Always,” Karl shrugs. “I feel bad, y’know? Sap and Dream— maybe Punz too, they’re probably the only ones that aren’t completely insufferable about it.”

Maybe he reads between the lines, only hears what he wants to hear. Still, the question tips his tongue. “You don’t like the others?”

“I didn’t say that,” Karl’s quick to refute. “They’re just very dedicated, Dream’s probably told you that too.”

Something along those lines.

George can barely put two and two together, his own hands disintegrating under every touch.

“Yeah,” he nods, eyes closing when he lets them. There’s something scalding about the look on the other’s face, so much so that he’s hiding away. “You sure you’re okay?”

But Karl just ignores it, leaning forward to ruffle his hair. “Are you good?” He asks, tugging at a bundled knot. “Do you have a fever or something? You’re being weird.”

The light is probably just too bright.

“I’m fine,” George grumbles, trying to pull away. The touch is nice, but he doesn’t let himself have it, not when that anchor is lodged back in his chest. “The test today was just a lot, very stressful, I’ll probably have to sleep for a year to get over it.”

The hand in his hair stiffens. “There was a test today?”

Karl will always find a way to make George laugh. “You’re such an idiot.” His eyes are squeezed so shut; shirt bundled by his waist when he turns to chase the comfort. “I’m going to bed.”

“Wait, George, was there actually a test?”

“Bed.”

And when he falls asleep his mind is silent. That never ending twist of biting off more than he can chew falling flat when he lets himself settle. *Karl*. The team and their burning hue. It’s confusing, and odd, and he doesn’t like the images flickering behind his eyes, but he lets it all happen.

A thousand memories all put to shame by one. He doesn’t like this, not one bit.

So no, he doesn’t think about how practice is going when he falls asleep.

And he’s not wondering when the next time he’ll see Dream will be either.

## Chapter End Notes

Thank u sm to [kat](#) for beta-ing this chapter! Read [hatefire](#) it’s a rockstar dream band au by them and it’s literally epic

More fic recs as always:

1 - this one is by mia, omegaverse, which may not be everyone’s cup of tea but i loved this fic more than life itself, couldn’t recommend more heres the [link check it out](#) add it to your marked for later !!

2 - And i have to, summer longfic, angst and pining, my baby [give it a read](#)

So so sorry for the wait with this fic, but finally it is back, it’s been sooo longggg i know and i hope you guys enjoy this chapter !!! <3333

[my twitter](#)

Comments and kudos are so so appreciated and are always the best motivation to write  
:] <33

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!